

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

N^o. 489.]

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1868.

[PRICE 2d.

HESTER'S HISTORY.

A NEW SERIAL TALE.

CHAPTER III. HESTER, A DRESSMAKER'S APPRENTICE.

So, after a few more days, Hester was transferred to a new abode, a needle and thread were put into her hand, and she was told that she had become a dressmaker's apprentice.

She sat in a gloomy room and sewed long seams without lifting her eyes. All round her were busy chattering young women, whose conversation informed her that they were well supplied with fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters. Their gossip was of vulgar beaux and holiday treats, the last visit to the pit of the theatre, the next Sunday's excursion to Ranelagh or Richmond. They criticised Hester, even audibly, when the mistress was out of the room, remarked on her outgrown frocks and broken boots, and tittered at the blushes in her face. By-and-by, when they began to suspect that pride as well as shyness kept her sitting in her corner aloof, they mercilessly sneered her down. There was Hester, desolate, against a whole laughing, joking, jeering band.

The mistress of the establishment was not an unkind woman, but her windows full of millinery were an ornament to Sloane-street, and she lived amongst her bonnets and feathers. Her shop was gay, and her customers were many, and she had little time to notice Hester Cashel. She did not know that the girl was unhappy. But Hester was learning her business, all the more surely and rapidly, because of her painful isolation in the workroom. Hasty stitches had to do instead of sighs, and anxiety for the pattern of a trimming, or the goring of a skirt, often held off the necessity for tears. But by-and-by the assistant in the workroom began to whisper to the mistress that "that girl 'Ester had uncommon nice taste." And presently the apprentices began to pause in their persecution and stare when particular work was handed over their heads, and entrusted to the fingers of their victim.

After some time it dawned upon Hester that she was growing quite expert at her business. She could cut out a satin bodice, and plait in a voluminous court train to fit a dainty waist as deftly as any mistress of the art who ever

handled a needle. She had also devices of her own in the matter of trimmings which were apt to charm the fancy of fine customers. "Give it to young Cashel," the mistress would say at length, whenever there was anything pretty to be done.

She was seventeen by the time this point was gained, and womanhood was beginning to look out of her troubled eyes. She was still shabby Hester, untidy Hester, in spite of all her efforts to be neat; and the envy of others did not fail to make her conscious of her needs. Things that had once been indifferent now pressed upon her sorely. Shame oppressed, and bitterness afflicted her. The past, with its intervals of sunshine, was gone, and the fulness of the present was swelling painfully around her.

There came a day, however, when the sneers and the insults that had harassed her were silenced. Hester spoke out once, and frightened her bugbear away for ever.

One day an unusual supply of nice work fell to her share. An envious spirit had been making merry all the morning over the "embroidery," as she called the poor stains and discolourments of Miss Cashel's frock. Hester suddenly stood up, and spoke as no one had ever heard her speak before.

"Young women!" she said, "for two years and a half I have borne your ill-usage; but I give you notice that I will bear it no longer. What if I am poor and friendless, and wear shabby clothes? Is it an insult to you? You should rather thank God that you at least have got plenty of fine flaunting gowns, and brass jewellery. If you please, then, you will annoy me no more."

It happened that the mistress entered the room just as Hester began to speak. The words "for two years and a half I have borne your ill-usage" smote her ears like a reproach; for she had known that there were many who were jealous of Hester. The girl did not attempt to hide her crimson cheeks and flashing eyes, but held herself erect amidst the amazement of the room, busying her trembling fingers with her work.

The apprentices sat thunderstricken, expecting a scene; but the mistress made no remark. It was in the middle of the night before that she had come upon Hester kneeling by her baby's crib, hushing the child to sleep, while the

nurse snored close by; and this mistress was not an unkind, nor a stupid woman.

That evening, just when it was time for the apprentices to go home, she made her appearance in the workroom with a parcel in her hand.

"'Ester Cashel," she said aloud, "I have brought you some fine gray stuff to make you a gown, a piece of black silk to make you a hapron, and a yard of blue ribbon that you may tie up your 'air as the other young women wear it. And as for the cost, I owe you much more than the price of these things for hover work, which you have cheerfully done."

The apprentices put on their bonnets in silence and went away to digest the shock. Hester was left sitting in the deserted workroom to plan and cut out her new dress. And she did it right skilfully.

"I declare that girl is quite a picture in her new things!" said the kindhearted milliner to her husband. "And I do wish that that fine lady who sent her here would take a little notice of her sometimes. She's different like from the other girls, and they're not kind to her, and she don't seem to take to hany of them. She never takes a 'oliday, and never gets a breath of hair unless I send her to the park with the children. She does her work well, but it's plain she's too good for it."

"Why does she grumble about it then?" asked the husband, a matter-of-fact person who kept his wife's accounts. These two worthies were at their tea when this conversation occurred, in their neat little parlour behind the shop.

"Grumble!" said the milliner. "Not a word out of her 'ead. And she'd work her fingers to the bone at a pinch. But it's plain to see she's been born and bred a lady. And I do wish that fine madam would come to see her now and again. I don't like the 'ole charge of such a one upon my shoulders."

It was characteristic of Lady Humphrey that one day about this time she made her appearance in our milliner's shop, being forgetful at the moment of the very existence of Hester. Her thoughts were very busy with strange matters at the time; but she wanted a new bonnet all the same.

"Sweetly pretty!" cried the milliner, taking a step backward, after having mounted her most stupendous chapeau on Lady Humphrey's severe buff braids. "How sweetly pretty to be sure! And how exceedingly thoughtful of your ladyship to remember poor 'Ester. For I don't take this favour to myself, your ladyship; you'll excuse me for saying that I know something of the 'uman 'eart, and I can see through a noble haction as plain as if it was a pane in this glass case."

Lady Humphrey was so amazed at this digression from ribbons and laces that she was silent for some moments, and sat gazing rather suspiciously at the clever little woman, who, with her head on one side in the most innocent attitude, was busy snipping out an objection-

able flower from the trimming of the headgear that had been purchased.

"I can see, too, that your ladyship is annoyed," she added, deprecatingly, "because I have served you myself instead of sending for 'Ester. But I assure your ladyship that she is hout on particular business of mine. I would not have disappointed your ladyship for the world. Had I known you was coming I should have gone hout myself sooner than sent her from 'ome. But about the dress, your ladyship; plum-coloured satin I think your ladyship said, with a tucker of point round the bosom, and a little flounce of the own round the 'em of the skirt. Very 'andsome indeed, it will be, and shall 'Ester go out to fit it on?"

Lady Humphrey could think of no particular reason why Hester should not fit on the dress. And so the milliner had her own way.

"Very haxious she was to see you, my dear," she said to Hester on her return after Lady Humphrey's departure; "and a very nice little hout it will be for you; which you want it, if hever a girl did."

"I'd rather not go, ma'am," said Hester, doubtfully. "I wish you would send one of the other young women."

"Nonsense!" cried the milliner. "After all the arrangements I 'ave made. I sent to Mrs. Patacake's in Knightsbridge for a sally-lun, and you shall have a cup of tea and a shrimp with me hearly, and a new ribbon for your bonnet, so that you may go on your business in the cool of the evening; for sure I am she will keep you all night."

So Hester brightened up, and fell to trimming her bonnet. She thought that Lady Humphrey must have been wonderfully kind when the milliner spoke so confidently.

That very evening about sunset a young man on horseback came cantering up the high street of Richmond, rode across the bridge, and took his way through Bushy Park towards Hampton Court. He was a very handsome young man, with a dark face, which ought to have looked pleasant, but his brows were knit now, and he looked rather fierce and troubled. Whatever were his uncomfortable reflections they were speedily disturbed by the shouting of boys' voices, a great clapping of hands, hissings, and the barking of a dog. A little farther on he met a group of ill-looking urchins, cheering in great delight; and a little farther still, in the distance among the trees, he espied the cause of their amusement. He saw an ugly dog barking and jumping, and the figure of a young girl drawn up against a tree for protection, her little grey cloak almost torn from her shoulders, her bonnet hanging back upon her neck. One hand grasping a parcel was held high above her head, while with the other she kept beating down the dog, which flew savagely at her arm and her shoulder, sometimes leaping almost as high as the parcel in her hand.

"Fetch it, good dog! fetch it!" cried the boys, with roars of laughter.

"Oh, the satin, the satin!" the girl kept

saying, desperately, too busy defending herself to cry out or make a noise. "Oh, the satin, the satin!"

And all the while the dog was leaping higher and higher, the girl's weary arm was relaxing, and the sun was coming dancing through the swaying branches, glittering over her bare yellow head and flushed face, as if in sheer merry mockery of her terror.

Then up dashed the rider. A few skilful cuts with his whip sent the enemy, dog and boys together, all howling in chorus, and flying at their utmost speed.

"The little devils! I have a mind to ride after them," said the rider.

"Oh, please, don't punish them any more," said Hester. "They are only children, and they didn't mean to hurt."

By this time Hester had put her cloak straight, and was tying her bonnet strings, and tightening the bindings of her parcel, containing the plum-coloured satin for Lady Humphrey's new dress. And the stranger was observing her earnestly.

"I cannot be mistaken," he said at last; "you are Hester Cashel."

"Yes," said Hester, smiling, "and you are Mr. Humphrey."

"And how in the name of wonder," said he, "do you come to be here alone with that great parcel on your hands? When did you return from your school in France?"

"I never was at school in France," said Hester.

"My mother told me——" he muttered, and stopped suddenly.

Hester turned pale. She had been indulging all the day in I know not what pleasant visions of a kinder and more helpful Lady Humphrey than she had ever yet known to be met with at the end of this journey. Her old distrust of her benefactress was roused now at a word; and she wished herself back again in Sloane-street.

"Why will you not shake hands with me, little Hester?" asked Pierce Humphrey, as the girl persisted in not noticing his outstretched hand.

Hester hesitated a moment, then laid her hand frankly and gravely on his, with an air as if to say, "I will do it for this once."

"What is the drawback?" asked Pierce, smiling.

"Why you see," said Hester, hugging her parcel, and regarding the young officer with a business-like air, "when I knew you before I was a sort of young lady with your mother up yonder, but now I am a dressmaker's apprentice. I am only the young person from Mrs. Gossamer's coming out to fit on Lady Humphrey's new gown. And dressmakers' apprentices are not expected to shake hands with officers in the king's service."

"Well, upon my word! what a bit of pride to be sure! A dressmaker's apprentice. I must see what is the meaning of this. A dressmaker's apprentice! You no more look the

part than I look like the Emperor of China. Why, Hester, your father was a gentleman."

"No matter," said Hester, with an imperious little nod of the head that shook two great tears from her eye-lashes. I earn the bread I eat, and that is better than being lady or gentleman. It is late now, Mr. Humphrey, and I must get on to the palace. I am very much obliged to you for sending that dog away."

"But you are not going to carry that great parcel," said Pierce Humphrey. "Give it me and I will lay it across my saddle. I am going to the palace also."

"You forget how the people would laugh," said Hester, smiling in quite a motherly way at his good nature.

The young soldier reflected a little, and did not urge this point.

"Well, at least, I insist upon your allowing me to escort you," he persisted.

But Hester remembered some holiday adventures related by one Sally Perkins in the workroom, and she steadfastly refused the honour of Mr. Humphrey's protection on her way.

"You will give me pain if you do," she said earnestly.

"Then I will not give you pain," said Pierce Humphrey, gallantly, and he rode off at a quick pace towards the palace.

CHAPTER IV. LADY HUMPHREY'S DREAM.

By the time Hester arrived, Lady Humphrey was busy entertaining her son. As they sat together, she looking at him constantly, her face was softened and altered. He was her pearl of price, her single possession. It was the one great provocation that kept all her life angry, the fact that this son was poor. She could not thank Providence for anything that befel her, because this glorious creature had not been born a millionaire.

She had never shown him much tenderness of manner, she had chafed with him always when there was a question of money, she had expected from him much homage and obedience; but she had worked for him all his life. And she had worked without success. By the assistance of a cunning man of business she had thrown herself desperately into one speculation after another, and had uniformly failed in all. She was poorer at this moment than ever she had been before she had begun to plan and scheme. And Pierce was deeply in debt, had a talent for getting into debt which would be sure to reach a rare state of development in the future, in the fostering atmosphere of good society, and with the constant culture of expensive habits and a generous disposition. At this present moment Lady Humphrey was bankrupt in pocket, and embittered at heart. There was just one bright streak on her horizon, and she was speedily to see it overcast.

She had been sitting at her writing desk, a seat where she was often to be found, and she had been casting up figures in a dreary looking book. She was so anxious to gain money, this

woman, so terribly, hopelessly determined to find possessions for her son. He had interrupted her at her task, and she sat opposite to him now, erect and grim, eager to question, to find fault, to direct. She did not kiss him, nor hold his hand, nor sit close to him, as many a fond lonely mother would have done. She only opened her grey eyes very widely, and gloated over him. He did not think she was very pleased to see him, this son. He never had felt she was at any time very glad of his society. Yet Lady Humphrey was a woman of strong passions, and love of her handsome Pierce was the strongest passion within her, except one.

As the two sat together there was a strange likeness and unlikeness between them. The likeness was in the shape and setting of the eye, the unlikeness in its glance and colour. The likeness was in the massive cast of the nose and chin, the unlikeness in the workings of the mouth. The woman's face was all intellect and frozen passion. In the man's no marks were to be traced but those of gaiety and softness of heart, though a petulant trouble overcast it at this moment.

"Well, Pierce, what news?" asked Lady Humphrey, anxiously, seeing that cloud upon her son's face.

"Oh, there is news of all kinds," said Pierce, carelessly. "Our colonel's wife gave a ball last night, and a rebellion in Ireland is more likely than ever."

"You do not look so dismal merely for a night's raking," said the mother, impatiently. "Neither are you greatly concerned in the affairs of Ireland. Let the savages cut their throats if they like it. It is no affair of yours, nor of mine. At this moment I want to hear about Janet Golden."

"Yet, news from Ireland and news of Janet might mean the same thing at this moment," said Pierce, in a caustic tone, most unusual with him, "Miss Golden being in Ireland."

"Miss Golden being in Ireland," Lady Humphrey repeated, as if assuring herself that the words had been said.

"In Ireland with Lady Helen Munro. And it's all over between us. We had a quarrel, and I was sulky, and behaved like an idiot. Lady Helen Munro arrived in town at a crisis, and Janet returned with her to her glens."

A heavy frown gathered on Lady Humphrey's brows at the first mention of the name Lady Helen Munro, and grew dark at every word that followed it.

"And you allowed this thing to happen?" she said, turning almost fiercely on her son.

"Allowed?" echoed the young man, bitterly. "My permission was not asked in the matter. My opinion was not consulted. We had a quarrel, as I have said. I sulked and stayed away from the place for a fortnight. When I returned at last I learned that Lady Helen Munro had been there, and was gone; and in place of Janet I found a small parcel containing the ring I had given her. No letter, no message. And more than this, when I saw her

aunt, the old lady coolly reminded me of that story of a silly childish betrothal between Janet and Sir Archie Munro. She thought it very probable the old arrangement would be carried out now, according to the wishes of both families, that the marriage might take place this summer."

"Archie Munro!—Archie Munro!" murmured Lady Humphrey, almost in a whisper, and with an unwholesome light in her eyes. "I am very poor, Pierce, very poor, but I would risk ending my days in an almshouse to prevent such a marriage."

"Yes, mother, it was you who led me into this trouble," said Pierce, sadly. "I might never have met Janet had you not driven me to seek her for her money. I am punished now, for I love the girl, and I have lost her."

"All through your own foolish temper, as you confess," said his mother. "You have lost her for the moment, it is true, but you will find her again. She has gone off in a fit of pique, and is breaking her heart by this time. You must write to her at once, or follow her."

"I will do neither," said Pierce. "If I were not a poor man, and she a wealthy woman, I might think of it; but, as it is, let Sir Archie win her if he can. She must hold up a finger and beckon me before I go near her. I don't expect that she will do it, for she's prouder and stiffer than I am, if that be possible. So Sir Archie will get her, I suppose."

"Softly, Pierce; you run on too fast. I will own to you now that I know more of the progress of affairs in that wild country than I have led you to suppose. And, trust me, the coming year will be no time for marrying and giving in marriage in Ireland."

"Tush, mother! How women exaggerate all dangers. Some parts of the country are disturbed; but the glens will be quiet enough. Sir Archie's people are too happy in their lot to turn malcontents, and Sir Archie himself is as free to pursue the ways of peace in his castle at Glenluce, at this moment, as you or I. Only," he added, with a short laugh, "he has got a trifle better means of doing it."

"He may not be long in that condition," persisted Lady Humphrey, again in that soft voice. "Wiser men have not been able to keep free of suspicion in times of disturbance. Sir Archie has rebel blood in his veins."

"I wish him no evil," growled Pierce.

"Wishing will not alter fate," said Lady Humphrey. "I have more thoughts about these Irish people than you could imagine—more than you could imagine, you simple boy, if you sat here till midnight thinking about it. The danger of their position at this moment haunts me."

"I did not know you sympathised with them so very much," said Pierce, a little injured; "but of course they are old friends."

"Old friends," repeated Lady Humphrey, with a pitying, an almost tender glance at her son's troubled face.

"Older than I am," said Pierce, "therefore

you naturally dwell more on their concerns than mine." And he rose and walked about in a pet; like a cross schoolboy.

"It seems that your concerns have become strangely identical with theirs," said his mother. "Sit down, till I tell you a dream that I have had about you, and about them, a dream that has returned to me night after night, till I can think of nothing else."

Pierce made an impatient gesture, as if he would say that he was not in a humour for listening to the recital of dreams. But Lady Humphrey went on without heeding him.

"In this dream," she said, "I saw Sir Archie Munro discovered to be a rebel and a traitor, and banished from his country. And I saw his forfeited lands, his castle of Glenluce, and all his various possessions of many kinds bestowed by the king upon Pierce Humphrey."

"After the approved, but irregular fashion of dreams," said Pierce.

"Nay," said Lady Humphrey, "but such a proceeding would not be in the least irregular. For I thought," she said, laying her hand on her son's arm, and looking narrowly in his face, "I thought that the gift was made to Pierce Humphrey as a reward for loyal vigilance in a time of danger and treachery."

Honest Pierce returned her strange look with eyes full of uneasy wonder. "Mother," he said, putting her hand from him. "I do not understand your conversation to-day. You cannot wish that such a dream might come true. Your words would bear a construction which I will not dare to put upon them."

A look of contempt passed over Lady Humphrey's face. "You are a fool, Pierce," she said. "If you were a thousand times my son, you are a fool."

"Let me be a fool then," said Pierce. "And you mother? it is because you are my mother that I will not consent to understand you. I will try to forget what you have said, and we will talk of something else."

He walked once up and down the room, while his mother sat silent, with her face turned away from him, frowning out upon the glory of the sunset, burnished water gleaming through the hazy trees; flower-beds flaming out of the gilded turf, like spots of coloured fire. Lady Humphrey saw nothing of the scene. Her eyes took in neither colour nor light, but fixed themselves on a little black cloud in the distance, steadfastly, greedily, as upon something that she desired to possess.

"The young person is here from the dress-maker's, my lady," said a servant at the door.

"Take her to my dressing-room," said Lady Humphrey, "and tell her to wait till I am at leisure."

"The young person from the dressmaker's!" said Pierce when the servant had gone. "So this is to be the end of poor little Hester."

"How do you know that this is poor little Hester?" said Lady Humphrey.

"I met her coming out, that is all," he answered. "She would hardly shake hands

with me, poor girl, she was so proud, and so humble. And she has the beauty and the bearing of a princess. 'Tis a sin not to let her be a lady."

"I have no objection to let her be a lady," said Lady Humphrey. "I only profess that I am not able to make her one. She must earn her own bread."

"'Twould be no great bounty to give bread to such a creature out of kindness," said Pierce.

"I gave it her when I could," said Lady Humphrey. "Now I can do no more than find my own. I have done well in giving her the means of supporting herself, and I desire that you will not interfere."

"Something must be done to place her among people in her own class of life," said Pierce, hotly. "You must think of it, mother, or you and I shall quarrel."

"It seems there are a great many points at issue between us," said Lady Humphrey, growing colder as he grew warm. "We must leave it to time to decide upon our differences."

"If you will do nothing, then, I shall see about it myself," said Pierce, angrily, taking up his hat. "I must ask you for Hester Cashel's address."

"Which I decidedly refuse to give you," said Lady Humphrey.

"In that case I must find it for myself," said Pierce. And then he wished his mother a good evening, and was gone.

After he had gone Lady Humphrey's eyes went back to her little black cloud, which had spread and increased as the sunset faded. Lady Humphrey's eyes now carried and added to it that last little fume of her son about Hester. So in that moment Hester's future was overcast with and wrapped up in the shadow of that cloud which was one day to burst on Lady Humphrey's enemies.

"But I will win fortune for you yet, you wrong-headed simpleton!" she said, addressing her absent son, "and I will lay it at your feet when you are least expecting it. And you shall walk over those who scorned your mother before you were born." And then Lady Humphrey remembered who was waiting up-stairs: and she thought about her plum-coloured satin.

"Well, Hester!" said Lady Humphrey, and gave the girl the tips of her fingers to touch. And this was all her greeting after the lapse of three years.

"I hope you have made the most of your time at Mrs. Gossamer's," she went on, while Hester was busy producing her scissors and her pins, and choking down a lump in her throat. The girl did not know what it was she had hoped for, hardly knew that she had hoped for anything at all; only now she felt the aching at heart of a disappointment.

"I expect you will take pains with this dress," said Lady Humphrey. "It costs more money than I can afford to pay for it. I think it was not very considerate of Mrs. Gossamer to trust the fitting on to an apprentice."

Hester knew her place by this time.

"If you will please to step this way to the mirror," she said, "you can watch what I do, and make your own suggestions. But I believe I know my business pretty well."

Lady Humphrey in her mirror watched the face that flitted over her shoulder, behind her back, beneath her arm, as Hester pinned, and snipped, and ripped, and stitched again; and she saw and recognised that it was a rare face, in which all the changes of expression followed one another in as perfect a harmony as do full chords of music when they are following out the method of a tune: with great sweetness and delicacy about the mouth and chin, great breadth and earnestness about the eyes and forehead, and much childlike grace in the little waving locks of warm golden hair that lay within the shelter of her bonnet. Passion and poetry, courage and simplicity, all were in that face, and Lady Humphrey knew it. And as the serious eyes criticised the fall of the satin on her shoulder, and the steady little fingers plied here and there about her waist with pin and needle, the woman felt the same antagonistic spirit rise within her against the girl that had risen once before against the child, when it had whispered, "Come out, Mary Stuart, and hear the nightingales."

Hester, having finished her work, was not asked to take off her bonnet, nor invited to any refreshment. That it was cruel treatment, Lady Humphrey knew, for the girl looked fatigued, and decidedly not robust; but Lady Humphrey's mood was to be cruel on that evening. Her son had made her angry and disappointed. She had hinted to him of things that lay next her heart, and he had turned from her in disgust. She could no longer dare to think of him as an ally. He had left her at last in anger on account of this Hester. And now here was this Hester, at her mercy. Should she give her meat and wine, and lay her to rest upon her softest bed? No, she would send her out alone, in the rain that was beginning to fall, and let her find her way back, unprotected, to London. A girl whose pure spiritual face, shining unconscious over her shoulders in a looking-glass, could make her feel gross, and cunning, and wicked, deserved no better treatment at her hands.

"How do you purpose returning to town?" asked Lady Humphrey, as the large summer raindrops came sliding down the pane. Hester was tying up her parcel, and the room was growing dark. Lady Humphrey expected terror, tears, and a prayer to be allowed to remain in shelter till morning. After all, perhaps she hoped for such a scene. It gratified her at the moment to be harsh, but it would have suited her plans to be obliged to relent.

But Hester, nothing daunted, explained. She had been turning this matter in her mind while she worked, and had hit upon a means of getting home.

"Mrs. Gossamer's laundress lives in Richmond," she said, "and to-morrow will be her

morning for starting at daybreak for London. She will take me in her cart, I daresay."

"But where will you pass the night in the mean time?" said Lady Humphrey, unwillingly.

"Oh, she will let me sleep in the crib with Baby Johnny. Baby Johnny and I are great friends."

And so Hester went upon her way. "Oh dear! oh dear!" she wept as she went along; "I will never come back to Hampton Court again!"

And yet it would have suited Lady Humphrey to have taken her by the hand, kept her by her side, affected an interest in her, kissed and made friends. Within the last few hours, even, while her son Pierce had been talking to her, while she had mused alone after his departure, and again while Hester's head had gleamed over her shoulder in the looking-glass, a light had shone upon her difficulties which had shown her the necessity of withdrawing this girl from her wholesome distance and independence, to fill a gap in the plan that was daily taking shape within her brain. She had wrapped her up in that cloud no bigger than a man's hand which had risen in the western sky. She had found a place for her in the economy of the scheme that lay at her heart. She had work marked out for her to do, with her innocence, her truthfulness, her beauty, and that well-remembered fervour of her nature, which had made her hostile, but might make her useful. She had had this arranged, and yet she had lost an opportunity, increasing the difficulties of the task that lay before her; and all for the gratification of an impulse of illwill.

"I have been silly!" said Lady Humphrey; "but it is not yet too late." And she sent off a messenger to Richmond.

Hester was supping on bread and milk, with Baby Johnny in her arms. The cottage door was open, and the summer rain was falling, falling, pattering over the broad freckled faces of the laurel leaves, beating the fragrant breath out of the musk, filling the pink cups of the sweet-brier roses upon the gable, till their golden hearts were drowning in refreshment. The laundress was packing up her snowy linens and muslins in their baskets, and Baby Johnny was falling asleep with his face buried in Hester's yellow hair, when Lady Humphrey's page arrived, and looked in at the open door.

The boy brought a note. Lady Humphrey desired earnestly that Hester should return and stay the night. The morning would be wet, and a drive in the cart not pleasant. And a nice soft shawl had been sent for muffling, and an umbrella to protect her. Hester could not choose but go. She looked round the homely cottage with regret, kissed Baby Johnny, and set out.

The night was not dark, and the gardens of the palace were delicious with the genial rain. Falling, falling, it quenched the fire at the earth's heart. So had melted that little cloud

in the evening sky, that had spread and increased, and saddened the fierce glory of the sunset. Farmers in simple homesteads looked out from under the thirsty eaves and blessed Heaven for the relief of the parched fields. Was there no one to pray that that other cloud which was growing and darkening within Lady Humphrey's secret ken, might also come to earth in timely tears of refreshment and benediction?

But Hester, tripping along the wet lawns, through those whispering showers, and all the fragrant breathing of the newly awakened perfumes, felt only that some echo of her childish raptures had come back to her for the hour.

LEAVES FROM THE MAHOGANY TREE.

A GLASS OF CLARET AND A BUMPER OF BURGUNDY.

IN this burning August weather, when the hot air is tingling and quivering over the dry cany stubbles, and the speckled partridges, happy in their ignorance of the rapid approach of September, are cowering down under the green parasol leaves of the turnips, it is pleasant to think of the fast coming French vintage, when the pure fresh cool perfumed juice of the Claret grape will be gushing forth in purple floods into the broad deep vats of Château Margaux and Château Lafitte—when the presses of Latour and Haut Brion will be growing crimson with the vine's blood, when the noisy blouses will be tramping down the clusters of La Rose and St. Estephe, and the reddened fingers of the laughing French girls will be toiling all day in the vineyards of Langon and St. Julien.

Gascony, the province our Black Prince once trampled over, he and his mailed horsemen, will soon rejoice in its vintage. The pure light fresh harmless Claret wine, its colour borrowed from the ruby and the amethyst, its perfume from the raspberry and the violet—the wine so delicate and fine in flavour, will come pouring from a thousand casks, scenting the air and refreshing the hearts of the honest workers.

Gascon wine may be thin, and what the port wine drinker of former days would call "sour," and it may deserve even more offensive epithets, but it is harmless; and it has this great advantage over the fuller toned and more generous Burgundy, that it is better fermented, and bears a sea voyage better: the best Burgundy being indeed scarcely transportable across the water, except in bottles, while even the lower class of the Bourdeaux wines improve by a sea voyage.

The mere common Médoc, or vin ordinaire, is not a wine of much body. Nobody will say it is. It is acid, mawkish, and unsatisfying—it takes a great deal of it to exhilarate even the liveliest Mercutio. Upset a glass of it on a clean tablecloth, as an experiment; it will leave a broad stain of a purple colour, getting paler and paler to the edge, until it ends in an almost colourless margin, not darker than the dye left by plain water. Our theory is, that

that centre core of darker purple represents pure wine, and the paler selvage adulterating water, which has never thoroughly combined with the juice of the Bourdeaux grapes. One would have thought that the villanous adulterator who poisons all our food would have disdained to lay his hand on the poor meek Médoc; but, the more's the pity, he has taken Médoc under his special patronage. Dr. Gaubert, a French author on wines, says that a wholesale dealer in Paris, in the banlieue, can make a barrel of wine to pass for Bourdeaux, which he can sell at ninety-three francs—the price of the genuine wine being one hundred and fifteen francs for the same quantity. He can introduce it into Paris, duty included, for one hundred and twenty-nine francs, and adding one-seventh of water, can clear sixteen francs forty centimes by the sale. This compound is made of Bourdeaux, Sologne, Sarnnois, Narbonne, and water. M. Lebeuf, in his work, *Amélioration des Vins*, gives the well-known trade recipe for imitation Bourdeaux:

Ordinary red wine . . .	70 litres
Narbonne	25 "
Malaga	5 "

100 "

Extract of Bourdeaux one flacon.

Cette, Bourdeaux, Marseilles, and Montpellier are famous for manufacturing wine. In the Moniteur Vinicole there are constantly advertised preparations to give bouquet and flavour to Bourdeaux, such as:

Alcoolat de Framboises, parfumé.

Extrait de Bourdeaux, or Séve de Médoc, un flacon suffi pour donner le bouquet des vins de Médoc.

Séve de Médoc (dite Saint Julien) pour donner du parfum aux vins, augmenter leur bouquet.

Teinte Bordelaise, pour colorer et conserver les vins.

For the most part, as M. Lebeuf confesses, Bourdeaux wine is a brewed, mixed, coloured, alcoholised, perfumed, and artificial product.

The vintage will soon begin on the flinty hills of Médoc; the flinty-hearted vineyard proprietors are, no doubt, already planning their adulterations. Well, it cannot be denied that the pure fresh Claret of the Gironde does get its unwholesome doctoring purposely to fit it for the British palate. We might bear with the natural infusion of waggon loads of weavils, green caterpillars, red ants, money spiders, and such inferior denizens of Gascony; but is it not hard that the heavenly juice, ripened in those little purple skins by the soft sunshine of the sun of France—that juice so cool, so pure, so fresh, so harmless—should be chemically poisoned for us by the shuffling merchants of Cette and Bourdeaux?

We groan as we confess the fact that there is no doubt that the ordinary Claret sold in England is a mixed, spurious, fired, corrupt beverage. We begin with the simplest proof. Look out Cette, the great fortified sea-port in

the department Hérault, in the best and latest Gazetteer, and what will you find?

"Cette is defended by a citadel"—and so on.

Then come the damning words:

"Imports Benicarlos wine from Spain, for mixing with French wines for the English and other markets."

The gazetteer has no doubt about the fact—states it bluntly, and in as matter of course a way as if he were saying that Birmingham makes buttons, or Coventry makes ribbons.

But it is not only Benicarlos wine that is mixed with Médoc and its wealthier kinsmen, and there are some just and some unjust reasons why Claret should be adulterated for the unrefined British throat. The cheaper Gascon white wines are mixed with the dearer high-coloured red wines of Palus. It is universally understood that the pure raspberry and violet-stained juice, when picked and trodden before fermentation, is sprinkled with brandy—four gallons and a half to a vat of several thousand gallons. This is to christen it for exportation. At a later season, the long-suffering wine is again dashed with Hermitage and alcohol, to warm and heighten it. This is called, in the Médoc districts, "working it." These admixtures, it is well known, alter the delicate quality and refinement of the clarets so tampered with, and in time change their rich pure colour into a faded brickdust, and cause them to secrete a deposit. Then come in the diabolical wine mixers again, the Obenreizers of the Bourdeaux quays. The Benicarlos wine is openly used to restore the body of nearly worn-out Médoc. Russia, Prussia, and Holland, are all spirit-drinking countries; but they do not purchase these chemical manufactures with the fanciful labels. I need scarcely say that the common white wines of Blaye, Libourne, and Réole, and the poor, thin, acid Bas Médoc, are all tumbled into the vats of spurious Château Lafitte.

We all know the form of defence that wine merchants take up. The quiet astonishment at a novice's indignation. The air of intense inherent knowledge, through glittering and supercilious spectacles, at the reassertion of old calumnies, "Exploded, sir, exploded!" But let us hammer again at the old abuses and set up the Obenreizers in the iron-clamped pillory of logically proved facts. Mr. Beckwith, who has reprinted the report on wines made by the English exhibitors at the Paris Exhibition of 1867, and who is a fervid admirer of Bourdeaux Claret, says positively that "it is notorious that there is openly sold every year at least one hundred times as much Château Lafitte and Château Margaux as is produced;" and he argues, with some justice, that it would be better if the wine merchants of Bourdeaux, like their brethren at Oporto and Cadiz, sank the individuality of their vineyards and trusted to their own good repute for honesty and integrity. M. Lebeuf, in his *Amélioration des Vins*, has proved that faded wine or wine injured by oidium can be restored by adding some black wine or putting a litre of Bordelaise dye

to each hectolitre. One litre of Bordelaise gives as much colour as fifteen litres of Narbonne. The black wine, however, often excites fermentation, and turns the wine sharp or bitter.

Here also is another proof. Mr. Shaw, in writing upon French wines, says the quantities of first growth of the Médoc in the year 1865 and 1867, were in 1865, one thousand eight hundred and forty hogsheads, or about forty-two thousand three hundred and twenty dozen, and in 1867 one thousand and eighty hogsheads, or twenty-four thousand eight hundred and forty dozen. France alone requires quite those twenty-four thousand eight hundred and forty dozen of best claret for her own consumption. Where does all the rest come from? Horrible question.

The Médoc district, a plain on the side of the Gironde, intersected by low, gravelly, flinty hills, has always been and always will be a district specially favourable to the vine. The generous sun glows on its grey flints and its warm reddish gravel, which reflect the nourishing heat of day and retain it through the night. The endless varieties of soil (the exposure does not much matter) affect the vine, which is so sensitive and spiritual a plant that the quality of its fruit is often affected by causes never discoverable by the grower. The poor wine of Branne Mouton is only divided by a footpath from the Lafitte district, and yet it always sells for one-third less. The Vignerons François, a technical book used by vine growers, mentions that in the department of the Côte d'Or there is a small vineyard on Mont Rachet. It is divided into three sections by small footpaths. The exposure is the same, the culture the same, and the soil apparently the same, at least in the top layer, and as far as the spade or plough can go, yet the first, the Canton de l'Ainé, produces a white wine of spirit and fineness, a nutty flavour, and a powerful bouquet. The Canton Chevalier wine, the second section, is of inferior quality, and the third, the Canton Bâtard, has no quality at all. It is probable that under the unlucky vines clay or iron-stone supervene, and prevent the roots growing full, fibrous, and far reaching. After all, there is no knowing exactly, as Gascons allow, why Château Lafitte should be soft and silky to the palate, and should have the scent of the violet and raspberry—why Château Margaux should perfume the mouth and yet be lighter and of not so high a flavour as the favoured Lafitte—why Latour should be fuller, yet want the softness of Lafitte—nor why Haut Brion should require so long to mature, and should superadd to the fuming bouquet of raspberry and violet the scent of burning sealing-wax.

Claret is allowed to keep well for the first seventeen years. At five years, however, it attains manhood. It contains little alcohol, but it is well fermented, and is less disposed to acidity than Burgundy. The red Claret is of more value than the white, though the white is less doctored, and requires no doses of orris root or

raspberry brandy. Many excellent descriptions of claret have never found favour in England, and are comparatively unknown to us.

An eminent French surgeon who visited England a short time ago, has publicly expressed in print his horror and abhorrence of our custom of drinking sweet champagne with mutton, and reserving fine costly Bourdeaux, at ten shillings a bottle, to sip over almonds and raisins, preserved fruits, grapes, and apples. Of course, the Bourdeaux then tastes sour and poor.

A recent distinguished and sensible writer on vinology has penned a pretty rhapsody on the contrast between the feminine claret and the masculine Burgundy. To our mind claret is the agreeable companion, Burgundy the sound friend. One pleasant author, that most delightful of all characters, a well-read medical man, says that Bourdeaux is a model of purity and freshness, and resembles young, fresh, laughing, innocent girlhood. We may admire the rosebud and the snowdrop, but there is a place in our affections for something fuller, warmer, sounder, and more voluptuous. As is Jeremy Taylor to Bunyan, Aphrodite to a Woodnymph, the Olympic Jove to the ever youthful Apollo, so is Burgundy to Claret.

During the reign of Louis the Fourteenth a great controversy raged in the Sorbonne among the black-capped doctors of the black and scarlet gowns, the bloodletters and coffin makers of the days of Molière, their relentless enemy. A wild young student fresh from his Aristotle and reckless from his Hippocrates, had rashly asserted in his inaugural thesis, influenced by some strange local prejudice or temporary derangement, that the generous red wines of Burgundy were preferable to the creamy vintage of Champagne, which this young man with much learning declared was irritating to the nerves, and productive of many dangerous disorders. The faculty of medicine at Rheims, fired by this slander, took up the defence of Champagne, and expatiated on its liquid purity, its excellent brightness, its divine flavour, its paradisiacal perfume, its durability, and all its other rare qualities. This challenge soon roused another champion. A professor at the college of Beaune at once braced on his shield, pressed down his helmet, couched his lance, and spurred his charger to the fray.

The Beaune man was very angry. His blood, half pure Burgundy, was tingling in his veins from the scalp of his bald head to the toes of his learned feet. He poured forth prose and verse, and pelted his antagonists without mercy—in fact, the celebrated Dr. Charles Coffin, the sagacious rector of the University of Beauvais, took the matter so much in snuff that he actually worked himself up to write a classical ode on the spirit, sparkle, life, and delicacy of his wine; and thus the doctor with the dismal name sipped and sang Latin verses, which may be translated, with gross incorrectness, by the parish bellman, somehow thus :

Bubbles of joy are springing
Up to my smiling mouth;
The gods have sent this nectar
To quench my ceaseless drought:
I can't spare a drop or bubble
To pour on the votive shrine.
Yet I thank the gods twice over
For sending me down this wine.

The citizens of Rheims were not ungrateful, and they rewarded the poet. Grénan wrote also an ode in praise of Burgundy, but this ode was flat and insipid, and poor Grénan got never a single stiver by it. The discussion raged hot for years, and many pipes of Champagne and Burgundy were drunk over it. It ended in 1778, when, in a thesis defended before the Faculty of Medicine of Paris, a verdict was pronounced in favour of Champagne.

Erasmus, worn with vigil and study, attributed his restoration to health, to having drunk liberally of Burgundy—a pleasant medicine, truly. In an epistle to Le Grand d'Aussy he says, with the warmheartedness of one who has well drunk: "Ought not he who first taught us the art to make this Burgundian wine—should he not rather be considered as one who has given us life, than the mere hander to us of a liquor?"

Dr. Druitt says that an eminent English wine-merchant was once dining with a wine congress at Macon. Our Englishman, with the national wish to make all things pleasant strongly upon him, propounded to the assembly in congress on the new vintages his three stale prejudices against Burgundy.

First. That Burgundy would not keep.

Second. That it would not travel.

Third. That it caused gout.

The answers were conclusive and irrefutable. They first brought him veritable Burgundy, a hundred years old, attenuated by time, but still sound at the core. They then brought him sound honest Burgundy, that had travelled round the world. Lastly, they bade him inquire of all the two hundred Burgundy growers and Burgundy drinkers round the table which of them had ever had the gout.

Lucky Englishmen of the nineteenth century! you can renounce the old Port black dose and the Sherry brandy of bygone centuries, and you can get a nice, clean, light, pleasant-flavoured Chablis at eighteen shillings, a full, round Pouilly at twenty-four shillings, and a most cheering and honest Beaujolais at four-and-twenty.

Let us draw up the bottles with the sloping shoulders, the beauties of Burgundy, the pearls of the wine merchant's seraglio—the choicest jewels of the London Docks. First comes that fine wine Beaune, which grows on either side of the high road running from Dijon to Chalon-sur-Saône, which runs through the immortalised towns of Beaune and Nuits. The dust from the wheels of the cumbrous diligences rests on those grapes like a white bloom, but they are none the worse for that. The famed Clos Vougeot is grown in an

enclosure of one hundred and twelve acres, formerly a convent garden, to the right beyond the village. Further on is Vosnes, a hamlet whose wines are rich in colour and perfect for perfume, flavour, aroma, and spirit. The Romanée-Conti is not approached even by the Romanée-St.-Vivant, the Vivant is only rivalled by Richebourg, the Richebourg only by La Tache. This amiable family of wines of the most liquid ruby, and the most delicious bouquet, combine the most ethereal lightness and delicacy with the most royal richness and fulness of body. They have all a peculiar vinous pungency.

About a league from Vosnes is the town of Nuits, with a small piece of ground only six hectares in extent, which produces the St. George, so famous for flavour, bouquet, and delicacy. Close to Aloxe is the vineyard of Beaune, a well-known and estimable wine, and not far from there grows the Volnay, with its light grateful aroma, delicate tint, and scented flavour of the raspberry. Not far off is made our old friend the Pomard, with a deeper colour and more body than Volnay, and therefore more adapted to keep in warm climates.

The white Burgundies are unjustly neglected, for it is agreed by all good judges that they maintain the highest rank among the white wines of France, and as one great authority boldly asserts "are not inferior to the red either in aroma or flavour." Mont Rachet stands highest among these for flavour and perfume. Meursault, Chablis, Pouilly, Fussy, Goutte d'or, are also all eminent Burgundians, but they do not keep so well as the red. The white wines of the Côte d'Or have their weaknesses; while the red Burgundies of the first quality keep for twelve or fifteen years, the white mature at three or four years old, but are apt to cloud and thicken as the years roll over them.

It is a cruel pity that with such natural and changeless advantages as the Burgundy vine-growers enjoy, they neglect to make the most of them. They gather the grape clusters in the Côte d'Or in a coarse and reckless way. They tread them before they throw them into the vat. They let the wine ferment with no other preparation than removing the stalks. Finally they gather during the hottest sunshine.

Many of the Burgundy vineyards have grand traditions. The wine of Beaune, according to Petrarch, was the chief cause that kept the Popes so long at Avignon. Beaune was then thought twice as good as Romanée-Conti. Chambertin, to the south of Dijon, is a generous and illustrious wine, of fuller body and more durability than Romanée. Louis the Fourteenth is said to have taken it into his favour, and to have quaffed it in the company of Colbert and Madame Maintenon, Molière, and La Vallière. It was also the favourite draught of Napoleon; with this he cheered himself after the great cannonades of Austerlitz and Eylau; but there is a report that a bottle

of rum partly consoled him for the disappointment of Waterloo.

St. George used to be held the most perfect of the Burgundies, for every aristocratic quality, ever after it was prescribed to Louis the Fourteenth, as a restorative in his illness of 1680.

Bourdeaux for the blood, Burgundy for the nerves, Dr. Druitt says. A great deal used to be said of the Vinum Theologicum, or wine grown in clerical vineyards, but no clerical vineyards have yet surpassed the best growths of Burgundy. They are perfectly adapted to our English use. They want only a moderately temperate cellar, and a warm room to drink them in. They won't mix, and therefore they rather baffle the wicked adulterators.

PAINLESS OPERATIONS.

It is little more than twenty years since the discovery was made by Dr. Wells of Hartford, America, acting on the suggestion of Sir Humphry Davy, that nitrous oxide, or laughing gas, possessed the power of producing temporary unconsciousness. Two years later the same powers were found to exist in sulphuric ether by Dr. Morton, and more recently in chloroform by Dr. Simpson of Edinburgh. It would be hard to estimate how greatly these discoveries have affected the art of operative surgery; and not that branch alone, but the whole of medical science, and how inestimable a boon they have conferred on suffering humanity. In the days when such eminent surgeons as Sir Astley Cooper and Mr. Liston were in their acme of fame, and whilst anaesthetics were unknown, the field of operative surgery was much restricted. Operations usually were avoided if they could not be performed with great rapidity, for there was danger from the restlessness and severe distress of the patient. At the present time not only is the surgeon with such anaesthetics as chloroform, sulphuric ether, &c., at his command able to reduce the worst cases of dislocation and fracture with a certain degree of ease, or to accomplish, without inflicting pain, the tedious dissection, which is to relieve a sufferer; but he can undertake with comparative safety many operations never thought of in former times. The effect of such anaesthetics upon the body when they are inhaled, is, firstly, to render it unconscious of pain; secondly, to relax the voluntary muscles, and to paralyse the nerves of sensation, by inducing a state of the brain like intoxication. Long before the important discoveries regarding the properties of nitrous oxide, made by Sir Humphry Davy, it was thought that there must exist somewhere in nature, a means of so paralysing the nerves of sensation, that some of the slight surgical operations could be performed without causing pain to the patient. Nothing, however, appears to have been established in proof of such a theory, until the experiments made by Sir Humphry Davy towards the end of the last century,

upon nitrous oxide gas, discovered by Priestley, 1774. In those experiments he fully ascertained the exhilarating property of the gas, and to some extent its power to render the body insensible to pain; for on one occasion having suffered much from the cutting of a "wisdom tooth," and "whilst the inflammation was at its greatest height," he says:—"I inhaled at intervals the gas, and found after three or four full inspirations, the pain left me, but on ceasing to inspire it, I quickly recovered my senses, and with those the acute pain of the gum, not diminished in severity by the experiment."

After this, which may be said to have been a very good proof of its temporary anæsthetic power, he does not appear to have continued his research; although he did think it probable, judging from his experience in the case of the inflamed gum, that the nitrous oxide might be used in slight surgical operations. From the laboratory of this illustrious chemist the gas found its way into every other throughout the kingdom; and for many years its property of producing a transient and very pleasant excitement was exhibited at chemical lectures. It was not, however, until the year 1844 that its power to secure a complete insensibility to pain was discovered and truly established by Dr. Wells—an able American dentist with a faculty for scientific observation—and in the following manner: In the December of 1844 he attended, in his native town, a lecture on chemistry, delivered by Mr. Colton, and, amongst other experiments, nitrous oxide gas was administered to several of the gentlemen present. The effect of the gas on different individuals was very remarkably shown; some were greatly depressed or sent off into a profound sleep, whilst others were raised to the highest pitch of excitement, and were cutting capers in a very ludicrous manner. One of the caperers became quite unmanageable, and hurt himself against the benches of the room. When this gentleman had regained his consciousness, he was asked by Dr. Wells whether the wounds in his legs did not hurt him, as the blood was flowing freely from them. He replied that he was not aware of having received any injury. As it appeared that the gentleman had been, whilst under the gas, either wholly or partially insensible to pain, Dr. Wells determined, on the morrow, to inhale the gas himself, and to have a tooth drawn by way of experiment. Next day, therefore, he procured the help of Mr. Colton, who administered the gas to him. It took little more than half a minute to bring him thoroughly under its influence. The dentist then pulled out the tooth, and Dr. Wells said, on recovering his senses, "It did not pain me more than the prick of a pin." After this discovery, many operations were performed with the aid of the gas to perfectly establish it, and with unvarying success. During the next two years, not only was it used exclusively by Dr. Wells in his practice at Hartford, but it had spread to the principal cities throughout the United States. The

method of preparing the gas was by heating the nitrate of ammonia in a glass retort, great care being taken to apply the flame gradually, so as not to crack the retort, and also not to raise the temperature above five hundred degrees Fahrenheit, as otherwise the nitric oxide—a powerful poison—would be given off along with the nitrous oxide. The gas, as it came over, was passed through water containing a solution of the persulphate of iron, and was ultimately secured in a large india-rubber bag, from which, by means of a tube, the patient inhaled it.

From continual practice in the preparation and administration of the gas, many improvements were made by Dr. Wells, and in the latter part of the year 1846, he undertook a journey to Boston, to consult many of the eminent surgeons of that city, as to the advisability of trying it in surgical operations. Having had a conference with Dr. Marcy, it was agreed, that, in a surgical operation which the latter gentleman had to perform, Dr. Wells should administer the gas. The gas was accordingly administered in presence of many of the most distinguished medical gentlemen in Boston, and the result answered every expectation of the discoverer; the patient being some few minutes under operation, and for the whole time perfectly insensible to any pain. Shortly after this another operation, amputation of the thigh, was performed by Dr. Marcy, and the gas administered again by Dr. Wells. The same success attended it. As the gas gained standing in the art of surgery, so its many disadvantages, arising from the difficulty of preparing it, became apparent, and many trials were made by scientific men to discover a substance, which would answer the same purpose, and be more readily obtained. This substance, in the form of sulphuric ether, was brought forward in September, 1846, by Dr. Morton, a gentleman living in Boston, of great standing in the dental profession. The first case in which he used it, was in the extraction of a firmly rooted bicuspid tooth, the ether being placed on a handkerchief, and given to the patient to inhale. There was not much alteration in the pulse, and no relaxation of the muscles. He recovered in a minute and knew nothing of what had been done to him. The success of this operation, induced Dr. Morton to apply to Dr. Warren, connected with the Massachusetts General Hospital, in order to try the effect of ether vapour in surgery. It was given in an important operation performed by the latter gentleman very soon after, and the ether having been breathed during the whole time the patient was throughout entirely insensible; yet the recovery occupied but a few minutes.

The efficacy of sulphuric ether as an anæsthetic was afterwards established by numberless operations, which were performed without mishap from its administration. Such a boon to mankind was not long in arousing the medical world of England and France, and within a few months after the first use of sulphuric ether, at the Massachusetts General Hospital, numerous ex-

periments were tried with both that and the nitrous oxide gas; the latter was but sparingly used in England, and sulphuric ether soon stood alone, continuing to be used throughout the country, until the discovery of the anæsthetic property of chloroform, by Dr. Simpson, about a year afterwards. The qualities of chloroform soon caused it to supersede sulphuric ether, which had a very disagreeable odour, and was highly inflammable, so much so, that cases had occurred in which it had ignited, and had done much hurt to the patient inhaling it; but chloroform is not inflammable. From that time up to the present, chloroform has been used exclusively by English surgeons; but its use has not been without fatal accidents, which apparently within these last few years have increased in number. The percentage of fatal cases is not greater than ten years ago, but where it was administered to one person then, it is now administered to many scores, and this for very trifling operations. Other serious symptoms besides the direct anæsthetic influence on the system may arise. From the frequent use of artificial teeth it occasionally happens, that these are swallowed during the inhalation of chloroform or ether. In one instance, a lady who had inhaled ether, was apparently in a dying state, respiration having ceased, and the pulse being just perceptible; this aroused the attention of the surgeon, and upon passing his fingers down the throat to admit a current of air to the larynx, he discovered an entire upper set of artificial teeth, closely forced down on the glottis. These having been withdrawn, it was only after persistence in the use of the usual remedies employed to recover a person from asphyxia (as in drowning), that the regular course of respiration and circulation was restored.

Chloroform is generally administered by means of a sponge, or flannel, upon which the liquid is poured, or else the vapour, with a certain percentage of atmospheric air, is forced into a bag, from which, by means of a tube, inhalation is carried on. We have been much indebted these last few years to the extensive researches of Dr. Richardson, the inventor of the "Anæsthetic spray producer." By this instrument a continual stream of absolute ether is directed against the part of the body under the examination of the surgeon, and the rapid evaporation of the ether from the surface completely freezes that portion, and renders it insensible to the knife. If we go back to the discovery of sulphuric ether, we find that in America, as in England, that anæsthetic quickly took the place of the nitrous oxide gas, but not to the utter exclusion of the nitrous oxide, which still was given in extremely dangerous cases, as to persons in the last stage of consumption, &c., and where the surgeon feared to risk ether.

In dentistry, too, its use had declined. But in 1863 it was again brought into active service by Dr. J. H. Smith, a dentist of Connecticut, and Mr. Cotton, the gentleman who delivered the chemical lecture at Hartford 1844,

residing in New York. Its use has been perfected, and it is found to have such great advantages for short operations that Mr. Cotton, in conjunction with Dr. J. Allen, a dentist of New York, established an anæsthetic institution for the extraction of teeth, by the use of the gas, and each person operated upon entered his name in a register kept of the cases. Up to January, 1867, the number of names was seventeen thousand six hundred and one, and in no single case had the nitrous oxide produced any alarming symptoms. From Boston the practice has extended into other large cities, and is rapidly spreading all over the country. In surgery, too, nitrous oxide is again used in many American hospitals. Its condemnation in England appears to have been premature and without sufficient cause. Some of the chief dentists in London have been reviving the experiments made on its first introduction. The gas has been administered at the dental hospital by improved methods, and with great success, the patients being brought fully under its influence in about forty seconds, and about the same time being taken for recovery. The nitrous oxide gas has one great advantage, which is, that it does not produce the unpleasant after symptoms following the use of chloroform or ether; but this may be compensated by more serious disadvantages, which experiment will alone show. The difficulty of preparation will prevent its use in the army, where chloroform must continue to be used, on account of its portability and easy application; but in hospitals, where these objections are not of such serious moment—if success attend it—it may supersede the use of the valuable, but rather dangerous, anæsthetic chloroform.

THE NORTHEVILLE ELECTION.

OUR SIDE.

I HAVE seen life as an electioneering agent.

This was nearly my first case. One of the members for the town of Northville died suddenly, and a gentleman of the Mauve party, who had long been anxious to get into parliament, offered himself to the electors. Not being able to secure on the spot the services of a good canvassing agent, he wrote to a celebrated solicitor in London, who offered me the job, and gave me my instructions. On my first interview with the gentleman who was to be my principal, I learnt what his intentions and wishes were, and next day began work.

The member who was just dead belonged to the Carmine party in politics, whereas, as I said before, the new candidate for the seat was a Mauve. The Ministry of the day were of the great Carmine party; the Mauves were decidedly unpopular in Northville; and our adversary had much local influence.

My candidate was very rich, had a popular manner, and was a director of large iron mines not very far from Northville. Our opponent might promise that he would endeavour to oblige voters by getting them post office clerk-

ships worth seventy pounds. But my principal had in his own gift situations worth twice that amount in the Clary Iron works.

There were many electors, and these not the poorest, who had pestered the late member with applications for government situations for their sons, brothers, cousins, and friends. Not more than a fifth of them had he been able, for very shame, to ask for, and hardly one in twenty of them had he been able to obtain. If we could only manage to persuade these gentlemen that Our Side was likely to come into office, we should thrive.

My first care was to secure as many of the public-houses as I could, and before I had been twenty-four hours in the town ten of these establishments had in their windows printed placards, on which appeared, in mauve (our colour), with letters six inches long at least, the words,

VOTE FOR MELLAM!

MR. MELLAM'S COMMITTEE ROOM.

Each publican was, in the first place, to have fifty pounds for the use of his house as a committee-room. He was to invite many to his house, and all who entered were to drink as much as possible. If any one declined to take more liquor, he was to be invited to drink at the expense of the landlord, who was instructed on all such occasions to say that he "would stand a pint," or a quart, or glasses "hot with," all round, as the case might be, just to drink Success to Mellam and the Mauves. The private bargain with the landlords was that all such liquors as were consumed were to be charged to our committee, and that the bill would be settled without any scrutiny whatever. The last clause of the bargain, but by no means the least interesting to the publicans, was the one in which I privately bet each of them (through sub-agents) one hundred pounds to one pound that Mr. Mellam would not be returned for the borough of Northenville. If he was not returned, each publican would have to pay the sum of twenty shillings; but if he was returned, I paid one hundred pounds. Fair betting is not bribery.

When the public-houses had been secured, I began to work at what may be termed the legitimate business of the election. There were two local newspapers—one strongly Mauve, the other Carmine double-dyed. Of course we favoured our own print, and not only published Mr. Mellam's address in the Northenville Mercury, but also sent in long rigmaroles as advertisements, which, although they were merely "copy" from the London papers, and of no use to our candidate, were paid for at the fullest rates chargeable for the most expensive advertisements.

Mr. Mellam's address appealed to the Mauve feelings of the FREE AND INDEPENDENT ELECTORS OF NORTHENVILLE, and commenced by declaring that it was "with a deep sense of responsibility" that Mr. Mellam submitted himself to their notice as a candi-

date for the honour of representing them in parliament.

From generalities the address went on to speak of the special and actual wants and desires of the borough. The Hougomont of our position was a purely local piece of business, which fortunately for our side, the Mauve principles enabled us to support.

There was, and had been for some five hundred years, an institution in Northenville known as the Cottagers' Almshouses. These consisted of twenty small cottages, each containing two rooms and a kitchen, with a small plot of garden behind. They had been built in the old monkish days, and the founder had left a farm of more than a hundred acres, the rents of which were to support the score of poor persons who inhabited the houses. The original intention of the founder was that in these almshouses there should be maintained twenty cottagers of the neighbourhood who had become incapable of supporting themselves. They and their wives—if they were married—were to receive also a small stipend every month for food, fuel, and clothes. The trustees of the charity were the mayor and town council of the place. But the value of the estate left for the support of the poor people had increased, and the question was what to do with the surplus funds, which now amounted to some seven or eight thousand pounds. Some maintained that more poor people ought to be supported. This was the Carmine view of the question, as represented in the columns of the Northenville Independent. On the other hand, the Mauves maintained that as this great increase to the funds of a local institution had been brought about by the care of the mayor and town council, the money ought to be spent on works of public benefit for the good of the whole town of Northenville.

At the time when Mr. Mellam came forward to contest the borough, the controversy respecting the cottagers' almshouses was very warm indeed. Our friends of the Mercury were loud in praise of Mr. Mellam, and "hoped that this well-known fellow-countryman of the electors would be returned for the borough, if for no other reason in order that the wretched faction which had by means of bribery and corruption so long misrepresented the town of Northenville, might not be able to coerce their fellow-citizens by imposing additional rates, and by the perpetration of a job which would saddle the people of that important borough with a burden which they might perhaps never be able to shake off."

Before leaving London, I had ascertained who were the agents in town of the other side, and a ten pound note judiciously bestowed upon a clerk in their office (betting him also one hundred pounds to one pound that my man would not be returned), kept me alive to all that was going on in that part of the enemy's camp. I had arrived at Northenville on a Saturday night, and on Sunday morn-

ing found a letter at the post office informing me that the Honourable Captain Streatham, our opponent, would be down on Tuesday, and meet his electors the same evening. "He cannot be away long from town," wrote my informant, "for he is a guardsman, and his colonel, not liking his politics, will throw every possible hindrance in the way of his getting much leave. But I know he will be down on Tuesday, meet the electors, do a little canvassing, and make haste back to town." We also must make haste if we wished to steal a march on him to any purpose.

Since we had secured the services of ten public-houses, I so arranged that we met a certain number of the free and independent at each of those places of entertainment, thus giving each publican a fair chance of his share of custom. At the house chiefly used by small tradesmen who do not spend their evenings at home, we met as many as professed our political creed. Their club-room was so full, that we were obliged to adjourn to the bowling green, and there, standing upon an empty chest, Mr. Mellam addressed them. He said he had been asked to stand for their borough by a numerous and influential body of the electors (the deputation that went to him consisted of his own local solicitor; the saddler he employed; the rector of the parish to whom his father had given the living, and three gentlemen who were connexions of his wife's), and that he felt no small pride in being asked to represent the ancient borough of Northenille, with which his family had been connected for the last hundred years and more. To many of those who possessed a franchise it was, continued Mr. Mellam, often a somewhat difficult matter to make oneself fully understood, but by educated gentlemen (a marked emphasis on these words, which were received by a "hear, hear, hear") like those he was now speaking to, who represent the commerce ("hear, hear" again) and the wealth of the place, he was sure his words would be fully understood, and his observations, although perhaps of little value ("no, no"), would meet with that response which all who value this that and the other tint of Mauve would duly appreciate.

One very decided trump card Mr. Mellam played at my suggestion. This was the taking with him two showy London men with handles to their names. Lord Henry Leaver was known to be the brother of the Marquis of Greystake. The fact of the Marquis's brother accompanying Mr. Mellam, showed that the most noble lord was his friend, and Greystake Castle made all its purchases at Northenille; so did Sir George Strayling, who had not long ago come of age, and was about to be married and to settle down on his own property. Each of these gentlemen addressed a few words to the various publics of our public-houses. We went the round of them throughout the day, the evening, and part of the night, until we had visited all the ten whose services we had secured. At each of them resolutions were carried to the effect that Mr. Mellam was a fit and proper person to

represent Northenille in the House of Commons, and that those present pledged themselves to do all in their power to secure his return.

Although the electors of Northenille are not—or were not under the old franchise—numerous, the town itself is a large one, and the population very straggling. One part of the borough is almost exclusively inhabited by a very rough, although by no means a poor, class of men, chiefly employed, either as masters or servants, in the cattle trade. These men are nearly all freeholders, although some of them own but small plots. Upon the Alms-house question they were fully expected to support the Mauve candidate. But there were others on which they were not at one with the party which Mr. Mellam represented. They were a rough lot, much given to drinking spirits, and not scrupulous how, where, or with what they struck any one who provoked them. But as they numbered some hundred and fifty votes, as they almost invariably voted the same way, and as, with all their faults, they were not to be bribed, the candidates of every contested election at Northenille made a point of conciliating them, and trying hard to talk them over. At the last election they had all voted with the Carmine party, and this made us the more anxious to see what could be done with them before "the other side" had innings. It was, therefore, agreed that they should be seen last, and in the evening, at a public-house which they frequented. In the mean time, Mr. Mellam and his friends ordered dinner to be ready at six o'clock to a minute at the Green Dragon inn, where were our head-quarters.

If anything like strong drinking with parties who have strong heads is expected, there is nothing like a dinner of beefsteaks before the meeting takes place. By my advice Mr. Mellam, with half a dozen of his finest friends, proposed to meet the cattle dealers in a friendly way after dinner. There would be no speechifying. If Mr. A. B. C. and D.—leading men among these dealers—would drop in in a quiet way, we might have a glass of grog together, and talk over matters; and if each would bring all his friends with him, so much the better would we be pleased.

For good canvassing work there is nothing like your real swell. He don't like what he has to go through, but he rides at it as he does at bullfiches in the shires, and his very pluck seems to carry him over. To see Lord Henry Leaver, Sir George Strayling, and the rest of Mr. Mellam's fine friends drink their tumblers of hot rum and water, or hot brandy (brown English) and water, and smoke their long clay pipes, any one would think they must have been brought up to it all their lives. I can take my glass when obliged to do so, but I could not match stomachs with these men, who had probably never tasted the villanous compounds more than half a dozen times in their lives. The meeting was a decided success;

and our people had the best of the game, for "the other side" had not yet put in an appearance, whereas we were well through a main part of our work.

THE OTHER SIDE.

THE candidate opposed to us was the Honourable Captain Streatham, thirty years of age, a captain in the Royal Horse Guards yellow, and a younger son of the Earl of Basement. Of course, Captain Streatham opposed Carmine politics to ours of the Mauve side. He was good looking, and had the gift of making himself all things to all men. Whether it was when talking and laughing with his brother officers in the barrack yard at Knightsbridge, telling the last naughty anecdote in the bow window at Whites, chaffing "a cad" as he toiled down the regimental drag to Epsom, or discussing soberly and solemnly the last phase of the ritualists with his very evangelical aunt the Duchess of Winterton, Captain Streatham always seemed at home, always at his ease, always on good terms with those around him. He had taken up the Carmine tint of politics, simply because his family had always sided with that colour. His father the Earl was by no means a wealthy man, and although now a member of the Cabinet, was anxious to get "the Captain" into parliament, in order that he might have a chance of some permanent Colonial Governorship, Consul Generalship, or other regulation reward of those who serve their party with undeviating fidelity for a sufficient number of years. The captain had one great fault, he was never free from debt. The Earl had cleared off all his old scores some four or five times, but he invariably returned to the slough of stamped paper. Lord Basement at last was tired of paying for the captain's follies, and resolved to get him into parliament. He paid, therefore, a large sum into the hands of a London firm of parliamentary agents. Once in parliament, three or four years' assiduous attendance and steady voting with his party, would, when joined to Lord Basement's interest, surely get him some good colonial or other appointment. He might then sell his troop in the Horse Guards, turn over a new leaf in the book of life, and perhaps end by turning out a highly meritorious government servant, and an exemplary father of a family.

This was the gentleman who had been brought to fight the battle against us. The captain's electioneering agent was a local man, and although he had the advantage of knowing everybody, he had also the disadvantage of being known to every one. In country towns everybody interests themselves in everything that everybody else does, and being fully aware of this, I soon found out that Spavit—Tom Spavit, as he was called—was poor, and that in the County Court of the district his name was as well known as that of the Registrar himself. Availing myself of this knowledge, I at once had printed a few placards and handbills, all of which bore some more or less playful allusion

to the state of Mr. Spavit's funds. One of these was in the form of a catechism, drawn out in one night by Joe Sleeman, the never sober reporter of the Mercury, and paid for with a five pound note. It was the best day's work he had done since he was turned out from the London Diana's Journal, six years before, for getting drunk when he went to report a dinner at the Freemasons' Tavern. This catechism was detestably vulgar and personal. But it served our turn, and was indeed thought to be a masterpiece of wit by many of the electors of the place. Equally in good taste were the jocose paragraphs put in the Northenville Mercury, to the effect that The Honourable Captain Streatham, accompanied by that wealthy and influential local gentleman, Thomas Spavit, Esq., who was well known to be one of the leading authorities of the town on all matters of legal process, had come down to canvass Northenville, and that it was very uncertain whether the captain or his devoted friend Tommy, of King-square (the County Court was situated in King-square) would be eventually proposed for the honour of representing the town of Northenville in parliament. By these small personalities against poor Tom (a hard working honest fellow, but much over-weighted with a large family in the race for prosperity), our enemy lost several points on the game. The honourable captain when he heard of it, laughed, and said, that we had scored at least thirty-five off the balls in a game of one hundred.

"The other side" when they got to Northenville, lost no time in setting to work. For two or three days I had been very busy making things pleasant with certain electors. To one I promised a clerkship for his son in the iron works with which Mr. Mellam was connected. To the other I said that if our man was returned, the tide waitership which he wanted for his brother would be a matter of certainty. I had in fact been so busy directing the affairs of our own forces, that I had quite forgotten to watch the enemies' camp, when suddenly we heard that a ball (nominally given by Lady Vance, a sister of Captain Streatham's, who lived in the neighbourhood) would take place on such an evening, at the Crown and Sceptre, and that all the electors of the town would be asked to meet the gentleman who, as representative of the Carmine party, coveted the great honour of representing the town of Northenville in parliament.

The ball must have cost the other side a small fortune. It was admirably managed. Invitations were issued to all the electors and their wives, without exception, and special invitations sent even to many of the electioneering staff on our side, myself amongst the number.

Lady Vance, who did the honours of the entertainment, was a handsome, showy, fashionable London woman, well up in her work. In ordinary life she would as soon have ridden in Rotten-row with her face to the

horse's tail, as have bowed or spoken to any one—particularly any woman—who was the shadow of a shade below her in the scale of fashionable life. To her house in Berkeley-square never, during the London season, came any one that was not cream of the cream. But Lady Vance belonged to, and formed part of the Carmine party. She believed it to be just as much her duty to please the wives and daughters of the free and independent who might be thus induced to support her brother, as it had been the duty of the English guards to face the privations and annoyances of a winter before Sebastopol. And famously she did her duty. Lady Vance, accompanied by some of her fashionable female friends, was from Llanholme Hall, her husband's place. The entertainers seemed determined to make themselves as popular as possible with the entertained, and they succeeded. Our meeting the electors at the different public-houses, had done us harm with the women of the place. Their husbands, fathers, and brothers, were already far too much given to beer and spirits; treating them to more drink had not increased their domestic happiness. But Lady Vance's ball was quite another affair. A woman will go anywhere if it gives her a chance of dressing. And when to this is added the chance of intercourse with a lady who visited royalty itself—the temptation was great indeed. The girls, too, would have noble lords to dance with.

This was one of the moves of the enemy whom I had despised, Tom Spavit, of County Court renown. Another of his moves was the opening of the two or three public-houses in the neighbourhood of the Crown and Sceptre, so that those who came merely to look at the company were offered refreshment "by command of Lady Vance," who was the nominal giver of the ball. It was so managed as to appear the most natural thing in the world. The middle, and lower middle, classes had been asked to dance and sup in the assembly room—could there be any harm in offering a little refreshment to those of the humbler orders who came to look on? If the entertainment had been given in Sir Charles Vance's park, would not refreshment have been provided for all comers? And if so, why could it not be done in town?

But this was not all. Spavit had me again. When the ball was on foot, I noticed that Lady Vance went one by one to each of the married women in the room, particularly to all who could not, or would not, dance, and entered into conversation with them. Of course I did not dance: I was there to watch the enemy. With each matron her ladyship spoke to, her words seemed to have the same effect. At first there was respectful awe. To that would gradually succeed intense surprise, and lastly, great pleasure. What can her ladyship be saying to them? I wondered. Surely she is not slipping a twenty-pound note into the hands of each Northen-ville matron? And yet I observed that before speaking to each of these females, Lady Vance

took from Spavit a small slip of paper, which she first consulted, and then hid away in her hand. Were these bits of paper cheques? Altogether the affair puzzled me greatly. On one occasion I was talking to a Mrs. Hodgson, whose husband I had been trying in vain for two days to get a promise from in favour of Mr. Mellam. As I talked to Mrs. Hodgson, Lady Vance approached, spoke to her by name, sat down beside her, and actually began asking how her little girl, who had lately been down with the measles, was, and whether that very fine baby boy of hers had cut his double teeth? Poor Mrs. H. was in the seventh heaven. How Lady Vance—the great Lady Vance, whom Mrs. Hodgson had now and again caught a hasty vision of as her ladyship's carriage dashed through Northen-ville on its way to the railway station—came to know even her name; or how her ladyship came to know that she had six children, and that one had lately had the measles, was more than Mrs. Hodgson could possibly understand. But when Lady Vance, who knew perfectly well that I was the active agent on our side, and looked at me in triumph as she spoke—when her ladyship capped all by saying she had at home some medicine which was an infallible remedy for teething, that the recipe had been given her by the Queen's doctor, as being the same now used in the royal nursery; I felt that if Hodgson the absent did not vote for Lady Vance's brother, he would have a bad time of it with the partner of his joys and sorrows. And I was right. The influential tradesman, and all who went with him *did* vote on the other side, and very much they injured us thereby.

That night, after the ball, as each female citizen took the arm of her husband on her way home, the topic of conversation was the same with every couple, namely the immense delight each mother had experienced when hearing her children talked of, praised, and prescribed for by a fashionable lady, the wife of a baronet and the daughter of an earl. Lady Vance was a humbug, but she was undoubtedly a very pleasant one, and evidently knew her business as a canvasser. I had the curiosity next day to enquire, and found out that not only to Mrs. Hodgson, but to two or three other mothers of teething children, Lady Vance had sent the medicine she prescribed—probably purchased in Northen-ville—and not only sent it, but sent it with the neatest little note to each, the paper being headed "Llanholme Court, Northen-ville," and the envelope bearing a monogram which was the wonder and the admiration of the Hodgson household for many a long day. Nor was the manner of delivering these little medicine bottles a matter left to chance or the post. The biggest of Lady Vance's London footmen, was sent over—much to his disgust—in the break, and himself delivered each note and small parcel with her ladyship's kind regards.

Now, was this bribery? I say it was. Mr.

Hodgson's vote and influence were as decidedly gained over to the Streatham interest by this gift of Captain Streatham's sister as ever was City of London longshore man "influenced"—that is the legal word, I believe—by a couple of crisp "I promise to pay" of ten pounds each in value, to plump for the interests of pure religion. And yet how would it be possible to bring before a committee of the House of Commons a bribe of this kind? Would it be punishable under the new bribery act?

It was all Tom Spavit's doing. The slips of paper that I suspected to be cheques or bank-notes were merely notes upon each woman whose husband had more influence than most of his fellows. Some of these slips reached me from a pocket-book which Spavit left behind him by mistake at a public-house, and which one of the free and independent opened and examined. The notes ran thus:

Mrs. ROBINS.

Husband great influence with High Churchmen.
Three children.

Baby (boy) now teething.

Be very civil to her.

A second one ran thus:

Miss HENLEY.

Unmarried; Roman Catholic.

Brothers, manufacturers; great influence with Irish.

Can't be too civil.

Praise her religion.

A third:

Mrs. SMITH.

Husband, retired shopkeeper.

Influence all over the town.

Son, grown up, in Australia.

Talk about the colonies.

Praise men who rise by their own exertions.

Tom Spavit had thus gained several points in the game, and the captain's chance of being returned to parliament was growing formidable. I went home planning and plotting what I could do to recover ground.

CONVIVIAL THIEVERY.

In one of the dirtiest of the many dirty streets in a very well-known city in the West of England, stands a public-house, long known to the police as the resort, after "business" hours, of the most desperate thieves that infest the neighbourhood. It is one of the worst of its kind, and is appropriately called *The Fleece*. The street in which it stands is as bad a back slum as any in Whitechapel or St. Giles's, and is approached by a labyrinth of narrow, ill-paved, ill-drained, and ill-lighted lanes and alleys. My humour being to see life in all its varieties, I made the acquaintance of a police officer of many years' standing, and learnt from him, for the first time, the existence of *The Fleece*. I afterwards saw announced in the window of that house of entertainment for man and beast, that a Select Convivial was held

there every Monday and Saturday evening, commencing at eight o'clock. The card in the window stated, further, that "a professional gentleman" (as I afterwards discovered, a professional housebreaker) "presides at the piano-forte."

At eight o'clock on a Monday evening, I set out to attend this convivial assembly, in the disguise of a sailor. After passing through a number of dark and dirty streets, I came to one somewhat broader than those I had already traversed; and, shortly before nine, turned into the street in which *The Fleece* is situated. Dirty-looking people, many of them Irish, were lounging at doors and windows, and men and women, indiscriminately, were indulging in short pipes. On both sides of the road were exhibited signs, announcing that "travellers" could be accommodated with "lodgings" at twopence-halfpenny per night. Here is a sample of these announcements, and of the lodging-houses. A house containing, as far as I could judge, eight rooms, including those on the ground-floor, exhibited a sign on which tramps and all others whom it might concern were informed that it was tenanted by John McGill, who described himself as "licensed lodging-house keeper," and was licensed for eighty persons. The inscription on the signboard ran thus:

"John McGill, licensed lodging-house keeper. Licensed too accommodate 80 persons. N.B. Travellers accommodated with supereour lodgings at 2½d. a nite."

Bad spelling seemed to be the order of the neighbourhood, for another sign bore the inscription:

"Sam'l. Stivens do live heer,
Sweeps chimblly's cleen,
& nat too deer."

I became aware of my close vicinity to *The Fleece* a minute or two before I got there, warned by sounds from the room of a very dingy house, a little beyond the residence of Mr. Sam'l. Stivens, the windows of which were open. In due course I beheld the representation of a heap of wool in the shape of a pyramid with the inscription underneath, "*The Fleece*." No landlord's name adorns this sign. I must not omit to mention that the street was formerly one of the most aristocratic in the city. In the front wall of one of the corner houses, an inserted tablet bore the following antique inscription: "This + is + y^e + NEWE STREETE +."

On proceeding to the first floor of *The Fleece*, where the Select Convivial is held, I was closely scrutinised, and mentally criticised, by two shabby genteel individuals stationed on the stairs to notify the approach of an enemy. I entered the room, sat down, and called for a pint of beer. Gambling in various shapes and forms was going on around; there were cards, dice, dominoes, and one or two other "recreations" I had not seen before. The players were men and women of all ages, from seventeen to seventy. A gipsy-looking fellow was shouting *The Bay of Biscay* with all his might and main.

My entrance, therefore, did not attract so much attention as it might otherwise have done. The vocalist sat with his eyes closed and his face directed to the ceiling. At the end of each verse came the chorus, sung in all keys, but principally inharmonious keys, from the shrill treble of the young woman of eighteen to the basso profundo of the stoutest-lunged, broadest-chested man among them:

There—ere—ere she lay
Till—ill—ill nex' day,
In the bay—a—ay o' Biscay, O!

Being determined to make myself as agreeable as possible, I joined lustily in the chorus of one or two well-known songs, which drew from the "president" the flattering remark that "The sailor cove can make a noise;" the "cove" thus flattered being the writer of this strictly true narrative.

"Bray-vo! bray-vo!" cried all the convivialists—excepting, of course, those who were too drunk to say or express anything—at the end of each song, with pleasure beaming from their eyes. The room in which we made festival, had been at some early period of its history the dining-room of some titled family. An earl's coronet surmounting the carved oak mantelpiece attested this. The floor, also, was of oak, but so covered with dirt, filth, and beer, that the present landlord must be as averse to the use of water for outdoors as for insides. Two deal benches ran parallel all down the room, and near the fireplace (which contained a roaring fire, coal being cheap in the neighbourhood) stood an old worn-out piano, intended to accompany the convivialists in their attempts at harmony.

In different parts of the room groups of tramps of all kinds; thieves, costermongers, quack doctors; itinerant fish, potato, coal, and cheese sellers; begging-letter writers and carriers; gipsies, and many others; were sitting or standing in every conceivable posture, comfortable and uncomfortable. They were dressed in such a variety of costumes as might have supplied the lender of theatrical wardrobes with the nucleus of a stock in trade, and more "varieties" than he would have known what to do with. Some of the "professional" gentlemen present sat on the boards and tables which contained their pots of beer, porter, and other intoxicating liquids, and drank them at their leisure and pleasure. The drink most in request was that known as "half-and-half," or "fourpenny," but which they termed "Burton." In the course of the three hours passed in this temple of Apollo, I particularly noticed one man who drank every drop of four imperial quarts of this questionable concoction. About forty men and thirty women were present; many of the latter sitting on the knees of their admirers, and drinking from the same cups—there were no glasses—and arguing, wrangling with, and abusing, their neighbours and companions from their luxurious resting-places. Most abominable language was the mode.

One could see that the ladies were considered, or, perhaps I ought to say, considered themselves, privileged persons. This was obvious as much from the manner in which they interrupted the male singers as from the severity with which they occasionally criticised their vocal abilities. Occasionally the progress of a song was interrupted for many minutes together by one of the women making a very bad singer's cause her own, and advocating it with an immense power of "gab," to use their own expressive word. The company appeared rather shy of me at first, because I did not smoke; it did not strike me until afterwards that a sailor who neither smokes nor chews is a very rare animal indeed. Being a stranger to everybody in the room, they had, perhaps, some idea that I was not what my disguise intended to convey, but all suspicion was allayed by my "hail, fellow, well met" and "how are you, my hearty" manner, and by the readiness with which I accepted their various propositions to "put my lips to it:" the "it" being one of the quart cups. As I had determined to make myself at home, I did not refuse to "wet my whistle" at their expense. In return I found that I was expected to invite them all in turn to "wet" their whistles at my expense, and, as I generally told them to "drink another drop," or to "finish it," I was declared "a hout-an'-hout slap-up brick!" I was eventually called upon to contribute to the "harmony" of the evening—your regular professional thieves can make use of some very fine words occasionally—by "tipping 'em a stave," or, as one young lady with a pair of black (I mean damaged) eyes made the request, to "hollar summat." The "summat" I "hollered," was Annie Laurie. I detected a strong Scotch accent in one or two persons present, and I knew that it would be lauded to the skies by them, however execrably sung by me; and I knew equally well that it is one of the most popular songs current with the lower orders. It did one good to hear them all join in the chorus:

An' for bonnie Annie Laurie
I would lay me down an' dee.

The rattling of cups and the stamping of feet at the conclusion of the song testified to the amount of gratification it had afforded. One or two individuals were very pressing in their requests to me to sing again, but answering "Not twice, thank you," and pleading a cold, I was allowed to subside into silence. After thus entertaining the company, I found that I was entitled and expected to call upon some one else to sing or "holler summat." In pursuance of this privilege, I called upon a venerable-looking man sitting in a corner alone. The old fellow appeared so woe-begone that it would have made me happy to have prevailed upon him to take an active part in a little innocent singing. My aged friend, however, said it was not in his power to sing anything, and he was called upon to pay a fine of twopence to the "gentleman" who presided at the pianoforte.

As I had asked him to sing, I thought I could not do less than offer to pay in his stead; but the melancholy old man, poverty-stricken as he was in appearance, with a haughty tone, declined my proposition, and paid the imposition himself—perhaps with the last coin he possessed.

This affair created a pause in the proceedings, which was broken by a couple of red-haired, long-bodied, short-legged women; who, without any previous words of strife, so far as I knew, stood up and began pulling each other's hair. Some of the bystanders presently interfered and caught hold of the combatants. "We'll see fair play," cried the friends of each vixen, who now tried her utmost to accomplish what her supporters particularly urged upon her, namely, to "go in and win." After "going in" and attempting "to win," during a disgusting struggle of a quarter of an hour, the more villainous looking of the two was declared victor, and the other having fainted, was allowed to lie on the floor. It would have been madness in a stranger to have attempted to restore her to consciousness, after seeing the brutal kick bestowed upon her by the husband of her rival—an immensely powerful man—and the no less brutal indifference with which this act was viewed by the majority. I nevertheless, as if by accident, contrived to throw some cold ale on her face, and stooping down pretended to wipe it off, whereas I was, in reality, bathing her forehead. In a few minutes she revived. The wretches were so hardened that, after calling upon the waiting woman to fill their quart cups, they immediately commenced singing, laughing, and shouting as though nothing had occurred to interrupt the harmony of the evening. Carousing, quarrelling, and singing, continued until twelve o'clock, when the landlord, a bloated fellow wearing a vast amount of showy jewellery, intimated that we must all "bundle out;" and those who, from intoxication or other cause were unable to move, were "bundled" out by him and his assistants in the most unceremonious manner.

So long as there was anything to be seen in the street, I determined to remain there, and until past two o'clock I was witness of scenes of indescribable confusion and disorder. The end of it was that a gipsy was carried to the hospital in a dying state from stabs inflicted by his "buddy," who was allowed to escape. "Where were the police?" A single constable appeared on the scene twice, but as no murder had then been committed, he did not deem it his duty to disperse the noisy assemblage. The first time he came, a terrible fight was going on, and I spoke to him, asking why he did not interfere, and offering to aid him in any way I could. His cool reply as he walked away was, "O let 'em fight it out!" Fighting, swearing, yelling, blasphemy, are nightly practices here; murder and manslaughter are not unknown; and night, peaceful night, especially on Mondays and Saturdays, is made hideous by a concourse of vile and awful sounds.

Towards three o'clock the scene changed. The pure cool morning air of God's heaven swept through the polluted atmosphere, and swept away the horrible effluvia and deadly malaria of bad drains, filthy slaughterhouses, and other plague-hatching spots. Not a sound was heard, and so calm and peaceful seemed the surrounding neighbourhood that I could not believe I was near the place, where, an hour before, the Devil seemed to have set up his kingdom, reigning supreme over all. I saw so much brute passion, vice, and downright brutal wickedness, in that one place, on that and several other occasions, that I am tempted to ask in this wise, what is to be done? The people are entirely out of the reach of all existing agencies of reformation, save the prison. Our teachers, our clergymen, our city missionaries, like the priest and the Levite of old, merely contemplate them or pass by on the other side. Wholesome literature is unknown to them, and if it were not, three-fourths of them can barely read or write. The condition of this wretched scum is more unsatisfactory than it was a century ago. The last twenty years have been years of great progress, but these outcasts from "society" have made no corresponding advance in their condition. They have been neither mentally nor morally improved in the slightest degree. How much longer shall these things be?

THE CAPE OF STORMS.

EIGHT years ago I was at Simons Bay, Cape of Good Hope, when a friend, who was, like myself, a civil engineer, received instruction to visit the lighthouse then newly erected at Cape Point. His mission was to ascertain, among other matters, how the lighthouse-keeper could best be supplied with water. I was glad of the chance to stand at the tip of Africa, a spot almost unknown to white men. Brown told me he had been there once before, and knew the road. "Oh, dear yes; I was not to 'flurry' myself about that; he knew the road perfectly well."

We had a choice, he said, of two routes. The first was the so-called "hard road" winding round the mountain which rises abruptly behind the single street of Simons Town, confining the town to a space never more than three hundred feet wide between itself and the sea. The road over this mountain had been cut with great labour, often through solid rock; but once made, it appears to have been left to make its own way in the world. The other route is doubtless the original path of the natives to the strip of land which terminates in Cape Point. It is apparently a natural ledge, running for ten miles along a nearly perpendicular precipice, whose base is in the sea, and whose summit is often hidden in the clouds. We agreed to go by this route, as being the shorter by many miles, and leave the choice of a way home to the chapter of accidents. The ledge

route from Simon's Bay was estimated at thirty-four miles, the other at forty-two, to the place where we should have to leave our horses and take to our hands and feet. This, too, was the distance on the supposition that we never lost our way for a minute, but went straight to our goal.

Although I had "turned in" betimes, it seemed that I had hardly closed my eyes before I was aroused by the nigger of the establishment, who, attired simply in his lower garment, stood at my bedside with the usual early morning cup of coffee. It was still dark, but by the time I had got my face out of the towel it was broad daylight, so rapidly does light follow upon the heels of darkness in those parts of the world. I joined my friend, and we proceeded to the stables. Brown had his own horse, and I was to trust myself to a hired animal which bore a good name in the town. My bespoken horse was, however, not forthcoming. In his stead was a rough underfed animal, who, as I stood looking at him, turned his head, eyed me for a while, and then heaved a deep sigh.

"Pompey" (the engaged horse) "he go lame in de night, massa; he not can put him fut to de groun' dis mornin', massa, and de baas say he no let gent'm'n like massa ride hoss wat lame, so de baas hab sen' massa his own hunting hoss. I'se berry, berry sorry, &c., &c."

The truth was, no doubt, that the master had let "Pompey" twice over, and preferred, as the more valuable horse, to send him on the shorter journey.

We mounted, and set off at half-past three on as glorious a morning as can cheer the heart, even in South Africa. The sun had not yet risen high enough to touch us as we rode along the ascending path by the sea, but the tops of the highest peaks shone with golden radiance against the deep blue sky. After going about two miles at a smart canter, we stopped to look round, and breathe the horses before entering upon the ten mile ledge. Below us, on our left, lay Simons Town. In front of the town, close in shore, were several ships, three of them men-of-war engaged in the suppression of the slave trade. Beyond was the vast extent of quicksands, over which all traffic has to pass going between Cape Town and Simons Bay. Every one is obliged to get over these sands as quickly as he can, for they are shifting. That which to-day is firm ground, may to-morrow be a soft jelly-like mass, shaking and rocking for many yards round at each footstep. The post-cart, a strong two-wheeled dray with a white canvas awning over it, having a pole instead of shafts, and carrying passengers as well as mails, has here six horses in pairs attached to it. They are urged to their utmost speed till the dangerous ground is passed over. We looked down also on that small island or rock in the bay, now partly taken as the foundations of a "patent slip," bearing the name of "Sober Island." It was formerly used by the captains of ships for repairing and drying sails, or other work that could not conveniently be done on board. The

men and sails, with perhaps materials for rigging up a tent to guard them from the fierce midday sun, were landed on this rock, and the boat then pulled back to the ship, leaving the men in anything but their glory, for, although only two or three hundred feet from the shore, the rock was surrounded by water at all states of the tide. Thus the men upon Sober Island worked all day within talking distance of the grog shops, could see the landsman put down his penny, and get his tumbler of wine, or the more potent "Cape smoke," while not a drop of anything but luke-warm water could be got at by a Sober Islander.

Before us, and on our right, was the vast extent of waters called "False Bay;" for Simons Bay, the naval station of the west coast, is only a very small bay in a large one. Across these broader waters we could see the immense ranges of mountains, which, with the table land between them, form the southern end of the Cape Colony. The nearest height stood out boldly, a deep blue, backed up by range after range topping one another, lessening in depth of colour as they receded, till the last was of a neutral tint so delicate as scarcely to be distinguishable from a bank of fleecy clouds.

We now tightened girths, and entered upon the ledge. It began at about four feet wide, and continued for a mile or two, narrowing so gradually that the traveller does not perceive the change until at last it becomes too narrow for a horse to turn in. Then it throws off disguise, and puts the wayfarer upon his mettle. For nine weary miles had we to follow each other, up and down, along this terrible path, which now was hardly ever more than two feet wide, covered here and there with broken bits of sharp granite rock. In places it was broken away, probably by a falling boulder from above, so that for two or three feet there could not have been more than nine inches of solid foothold. Now and then a fallen bush lay right across the track. Over this the horses would go gingerly, trying each step with their fore feet before trusting their whole weight on it; for on our left was a nearly sheer precipice, and many hundreds of feet below the sea broke in thunder against the iron-bound coast, with a roar so deafening as fairly to oblige us to shout to one another any necessary warning. On the right above us was the continuation of the cliff, broken here and there into "Kloofs" or ravines, so embedded in vegetation of all sorts—such as mimosa, gladiolus, geraniums, arum, and other plants known only to botanists—that the watercourse itself was hid from view. In all cases but one these watercourses had made tunnels under our path to reach the sea, so that we often rode without knowing it, over so many "devil's bridges."

I had at starting held my reins pretty short, and attempted to keep some sort of check upon my horse, but this annoyed him so much that when we came to a more than usually ticklish place he would abruptly stop and shake his

head, as if in deprecation of my interference with his judgment. So I found it necessary to slack out the reins and leave him perfect liberty to do as it seemed good to him. That day's experience raised my estimate of the Cape horse. I was wont to look on him as a rough uncouth drudge, generally vicious, much given to buck-jumping and biting, who would take his rider any distance up to thirty miles at a shuffling canter without breaking into a walk for a minute; or pound away for an hour full gallop after a buck, and when the game had been brought down either by rifle or dogs, carry his rider, plus the dead buck, back to the place from which he started often many hours before. For such work as this, he is paid with a small sheaf of oats, roughly cut up by being drawn across a sickle blade fixed in a tree or wall—ear, corn, and straw together, and then “knee-haltered” and turned loose to get his own living as best he can. I am speaking of the up country, not of the comparatively delicate town horse. In spite of this coarse treatment, he thrives. And here I had the opportunity of seeing his inborn instinct in the traversing of such dangerous passes as this one, of which the very remembrance sends a cold shiver along my spinal marrow to this day. The careful manner in which he eyed every obstacle hanging across the path, appearing to estimate whether it left room to pass without touching; the dainty way in which he felt his ground where the path was in part hidden by grass or shrubs; and above all the deliberate pains he took to get his fore legs well planted in a firm place on the other side of a break in the path before making the gentle spring which cleared it, was equal in its way to the best efforts of reason.

In one case, as before said, a torrent had torn away the track, leaving a break in the ledge about thirty feet across, and as many deep. Here we were obliged to dismount, and leading our horses, managed in some way to scramble down and up again, clinging on to shrubs and tufts of grass. How the horses found foothold I cannot explain. On regaining the ledge we had to walk some distance before there was a spot broad enough to let us remount, and not till then did I fully appreciate the fearful nature of this pass. I have often walked along a high wall of an unfinished building only fourteen inches broad, but that is a safe lounge in comparison to this terrible track. From the wall one does not at all events look down on those huge white-crested waves dashing themselves into breakers below, and roaring to devour the traveller if once upon that nine-mile passage he make a false step, or turn faint or giddy.

The peculiar barking cry of the Cape baboon frequently hailed us as we passed along, but these animals do not care to show themselves if they can avoid it. They are, if left alone, timid and harmless creatures, but when wounded and at bay, know how to use their hands and teeth. They will even combine on emergencies against a common enemy, as in the case of the Cape

tiger. This tiger is particularly fond of young baboon, but it must be very young to suit his tooth. To get it he will lie in wait for days together on the mountains, and often succeeds in snatching a youngster almost out of its mother's arms. The distracted mother with piercing shrieks then lays her case before the council of her people, who, if the tiger has not made his escape, fall on him in a body and invariably succeed in killing him. The battle field is recognised by bones and pieces of skin of both tiger and baboon; not more, for the survivors of this forlorn hope make a clean sweep of everything digestible, devouring not only their enemy, but also those of their own kindred whom the tiger has killed in the conflict. I remember being roused one night at a place some way inland, by the most unearthly shrieks, mingled with the roar of a large animal in rage and pain, the noise coming from a mountain at the back of the house. It was explained to me next morning that what I had heard was the tumult usually produced on occasions of monkey stealing, and that probably the tiger had been caught red-handed and received lynch law.

Half-way in mid air, between us and the sea, were large flights of sea gulls. There were specimens of nearly all the varieties I had hitherto seen, the exceptions being the large albatross and the Cape pigeon, both of which I have caught from shipboard, but have never seen from off land. Where these two birds build their nests and rear their young is a mystery; I never heard that the egg of either could be shown in evidence that a nest had been discovered. The utter solitude of this region, which not half-a-dozen persons pass during the year, as well as the perfect inaccessibility of all parts of the cliff except this ledge, seems to recommend it to the sea birds as their breeding place.

At length, and with a feeling of relief, I noticed that the ledge was gradually widening, and suddenly, as we rounded the sharp angle of the last rock, there was stretched before me one of those great flats of table-land peculiar to the Cape. It is a plain of sand, dotted with granite boulders of great height, and generally of one unbroken piece of stone throughout. The vegetation varies. In dry places grows the sugar bush, with its large handsome flower, which, when shaken, will deposit in your hand a table-spoonful of sweet liquid, very grateful to the parched tongue. Also the wait-a-bit bush, so called from its bearing barbed thorns, which, should they catch in dress or flesh, will detain the traveller a bit before he can get free from them. Then there is the bitter aloe, never absent from South African scenery; and, lastly, the Hottentot fig, a ground creeper, with thick fleshy leaves, triangular in section. It bears a pretty yellow flower and fresh acid fruit. This plant is supposed to possess medicinal virtues, in which I am a firm believer. Like the aloe it preserves its life throughout the year, and thrives on after every other green thing has

been scorched up by the sun, thrives on although growing in fine white sand, without a drop of moisture for nine months, or often longer. On low places, on the other hand, where the sand is still moist from last season's rain, one finds upon these plains the most gorgeous shrubs and flowers. Besides the sweet scented geranium, fuchsia, clematis, jasmine, passion flower, lilies, and hyacinths of all sizes and colours, there are many sorts of heath, ferns, and other delightful families of plants.

Another feature in the landscape is made by the immense black round-headed cones, built in the most solid manner, the outside shell being about half an inch thick, composed of a sort of watertight cement. The inhabitants are a colony of rather large black ants, who have subways supposed to extend for many hundreds of yards round, by which they approach and leave their head quarters, so that no ant is ever seen close to his hill.

We had to ride for about seven miles across this flat, before we joined the bullock-waggon track which leads to Mr. M.'s farm, and there ceases. After a short halt, in which we took a few bites at our sandwiches and heartily wished for some water to qualify our wine, we lighted up pipes to discourage thirst and started again. As for the last three hours we had been obliged to go at a walking pace, we now tried a smart gallop. After riding for about an hour, during which we must have covered twelve miles, my guide, philosopher, and friend, who had for some time been looking about him for what he could not see, pulled up, and announced that he had lost the way. His chief landmark was a bush on the top of a large rock, but the bush had been blown down, or we had overlooked it. There was nothing for it but to try back, and after a long search for "spoor" (footprints or hoof-marks of former travellers), we hit upon something which, though half obliterated by the blown sand, looked like marks of a naked foot. This track we resolved to follow, and set off again at full gallop to make up for lost time.

In an instant I found myself flying straight through the air, as though shot from a gun. In the act of coming to earth, I saw my horse apparently standing on his head, with his back towards me. Presently, and before I had time to creep out of the way, he lost balance and fell with a dull thud, broad on the flat of his back within a few inches of where I was lying. The Cape mole, a little animal about the size of our rabbit has a knack of burrowing about six inches under the top of the ground, and here and there, when meeting with a particularly rich spot he works it till it is cleared out, thus leaving a hole often three or four feet deep, with the surface soil still covering it. This, after a time, becomes sunbaked, hard and brittle, yielding easily when trodden. Over such a hole my grey had the ill luck to plant his fore feet, and breaking through the crust, plumped in nearly up to his shoulders. I picked myself up and shook myself, the horse also was

soon up, but seemed rooted to the ground, and shook with terror. It was some time before, by dint of patting and coaxing, I got leave from him to mount again.

We soon convinced ourselves that by following the footsteps we were on the right track, so went on at a steady ten-mile-an-hour pace. It was about nine o'clock, and the heat was telling strongly on the riders, but more on the horses. There was not a cloud in the sky, which, round about the sun, was of a bright copper colour, gradually shaded off into the intense cobalt blue of the southern hemisphere. We were attacked by swarms of vile little creatures—not so big as our English gnat—called "sand flies," who can inflict a sharp sting on the face or any other exposed part. They seem to take peculiar pleasure in getting into the eyes and ears or up the nose, and had I been so inclined, I could, by simply opening my mouth, have caught a fair mouthful. The horses, too, had their tormentor in the shape of a large grey fly, something like a hornet, which, after drinking its fill, leaves behind a wound whence the blood trickles in a streamlet. We disturbed during the day a good deal of game, as partridge, quail, doves, and the like, and many bright plumaged songless birds peculiar to South Africa. Amongst others a stately secretary bird stalked solemnly out of our path, as if he were well aware of his legal status, and of the law which protects his feathered carcass from being made "a body" of by the penalty of twenty pounds sterling. He is snake and reptile destroyer to the colony, living, in fact, upon venomous creatures, hence, to prevent extermination, the substantial fine imposed on his destroyer. A small green-grey bird, the Cape canary, is the only one that has any pretension to a continuous song, which is much like that of our yellow cage canary, without the disagreeable high ear-piercing notes.

I was not sorry to see in the distance the reed roof of the house belonging to Mr. M.'s sheep farm, for we were there to get a draught of water, now ardently longed for by ourselves and horses; and, if the farmer were at home, should, no doubt, be asked to rest in the shade for half an hour. But on nearing the shanty—for it was little more—our only welcome was a break out of half a dozen gaunt Caffir curs or half-wild dogs, somewhat resembling the Scotch deer hound, who ran forward to meet us with their peculiar howl (the Cape dogs cannot bark), showing their rows of white teeth, and only to be kept from our legs by a liberal use of the rhinoceros-hide whip. These dogs can be safely left in charge of a house when, as in the present case, the master is absent, and woe betide the ill-starred pedestrian, especially if he be a "gent'lum of colour," who ventures to approach its vicinity. Grumbling at our ill-luck, we rode on to the pool and allowed our half-baked horses a moderate draught. A few minutes' rest and we were off again on the last stage of our journey.

Our course after leaving the farm was due south by the compass, and at last we had the pleasure of seeing the lighthouse ahead. About three quarters of a mile before reaching it, the ascending plain came to an end at the high rock on the peak of which the lighthouse is perched. Here then we had to leave the horses, knee-haltered and turned loose. This knee-haltering consists in tying the soft untanned leather strap of the halter in a scientific manner just above the knee, so that it cannot slip over, but is not tight enough to impede circulation. Length enough of strap is given to allow the horse to feed off the ground, but should he attempt to go at anything beyond a walk, the effect is either to pull the head down to the knee, or the knee up to the head. Both positions making a quick pace impossible, the owner can regain his animal without much trouble. But I have seen a cute old stager deliberately lift his knee-haltered foreleg off the ground, high enough to enable him to carry his head in the position for running, and so "make tracks" from his enraged pursuer on three legs, at a good seven miles an hour. These halters and straps always form part of the gear of the travelling horse in the Cape Colony, whether for riding or driving, as does in Australia the picket rope.

The pull up the steep rock was hot work, there being no path but such as had been made by water torrents, and furrows worn by the constructors of the lighthouse when they dragged up their materials. But this they did chiefly by hoisting the heavy iron plates from one ledge to the one above by ropes and pulleys. Owing to this difficulty and the absence of all roads, the expense of conveying these materials from Simons Bay—a distance of forty-two miles—considerably exceeded the whole cost of bringing them from the manufactory in England to the sea port, and thence by ship to the Cape.

A team of from sixteen to twenty-four oxen is required to drag, through the heavy yielding sand, a load that a couple of dray horses would easily convey along an English road.

The lighthouse keeper was out on the rock watching our toilsome ascent through a long ship's glass. A strong pull, a final breathless desperate struggle, and we stand, hot, heaving, panting, and perspiring, at the southernmost point of Africa; the actual "Cape of Storms" enchanted ground. For is it not the very home, castle-keep, of the dread Flying Dutchman? No longer a solitary storm-lashed rock "far from humanity's reach," the meddling British engineer has annexed it, and supplies it with elliptic lenses, argand lamps, plate-glass, and colza-oil.

The lighthouse is built on a small plateau at the summit of the rock, partly natural, chiefly levelled by art. There may be perhaps thirty feet of level space in front of the house, and then abruptly, plumb, without a foot of incline, the rock, many hundreds of feet deep, drops into the sea. The water for a mile or two

round is studded with sunken rocks, sharp as needles, around which the sea boils and lashes itself into a white foam. Woe to the ship and men who are carried into this archipelago of reefs. None live to tell the misadventure.

Standing on this platform one may by an effort of fancy draw a line from himself due south, which forms the boundary between two of the largest oceans in the world, the Atlantic on the right, the Indian on the left. And one may dream that the two mighty powers having chosen this spot as their battle field, are here constantly engaged in struggle for supremacy, sometimes with more sometimes with less fury, but never in the calmest weather ceasing from the strife. The huge waves came rolling along the east and west sides, meeting in front where we stood (and for miles away along our imaginary line) with a concussion like a thunder clap, sending a body of water up into the air, which during a gale is carried as far as the lantern of the lighthouse, coating the glass with an incrustation of salt.

Looking immediately below, where the surge, owing to the protection of the reefs, was comparatively quiet, I saw what seemed to me to be moving masses of discoloured water, each patch several acres in extent. I could hardly believe that these coloured patches were fish. But masses of fish they were, attracted hither by the million to feed within the reefs. The Cape waters I well knew produce fish in incredible numbers and variety. I had often seen, amongst others, a hideous monster, in appearance something between a shark and a jack, weighing from twelve to twenty pounds, sold in the market at Cape Town for threepence; but till now, of the actual prodigality of marine life on these coasts I had formed no adequate idea.

Brown's mission proved rather a difficult one. There was no good water in the neighbourhood. The two alternatives were, to bring it fifteen miles in barrels about once a month—a plan that involved the labour of getting the barrels up the rock by rope slings, and pulleys; or to form tanks and collect the rain-water falling on the roof and plateau during the three wet months, for use during the remaining nine. Both methods were bad, one from its cost, the other from the uncertainties of the wet season: in one year there would be, perhaps, rain enough to fill the tanks ten times over; in the next year, perhaps, not enough to moisten the ground. I do not know how the problem has been solved.

The keeper, who was an old man-of-war's man, asked, I remember, for two boons. Firstly, he wanted a flag-staff and a code of ship's signals. When asked of what use they would be, he answered, "Well, you see, sir, if so be a vessel hugs too close in, I'd up signals and tell her to sheer furdur off." But seeing that, if a ship were near enough to make out signals, she would be already close into the reefs, and perhaps be tempted into further danger by her desire to make out what the

signals were, that boon was denied at once. Secondly, the old tar wished to know whether he could annex a piece of ground and cultivate it. Being told that he was "monarch of all he surveyed," and that no one would dispute his right to till the whole promontory if it so pleased him, he replied that that being so, he should like to have a few waggon loads of soil brought up from Simons Bay, for he had "spotted" a nice piece of level rock under the lee of a big boulder close by the house, where it only wanted a foot or two of stuff to "grow 'taters and greens stunnin'." Were an eccentric millionaire, having taken it into his head to have a cabbage garden in St. Paul's churchyard, to buy and pull down a warehouse for its site, he would hardly compass a more costly plantation than would have been the potato ground "under the lee of the big boulder" at Cape Point, constructed according to the keeper's notions.

The descent from the rock was soon effected, and, arrived on the plain, we had not far to look for our horses. The poor brutes had given up looking for anything to eat, for the sun had scorched up every green thing to tinder. But they had found a small baboon-frequented pool, and filled themselves to the throat with brackish water.

We began our return journey at three o'clock. The heat was still intense; indeed, in January—which is, of course, midsummer at the Cape—the hottest part of the day is, I think, between two and five P.M. I had at starting declined most positively to return by the ledge route, so it was agreed to get on as fast as we could, and try to hit the beginning of the "hard road" before dark. My unfortunate grey, after covering about eight miles, became the picture of despair, his head and ears hung down, the water he carried was leaking out and ran down him in large hot drops; he had been rolling, too, while still hot, and the fine white sand had stuck, giving his coat the feel and look of a piece of sand-paper. Finally, he stumbled frightfully. I was beginning to think it would be my fate to camp out for the remainder of that day and night, when I luckily bethought me of a few remaining sandwiches. I dismounted and offered my horse one. He smelt at it and jerked his head in the air with the action of a person who has taken a long sniff at a very pungent bottle of salts. Each sandwich contained two slices of beef, enclosing a thick layer of strong colonial condiment, the principal ingredients of which I know are mustard and cayenne pepper. But his fierce hunger got the better even of this; he bolted them one after another, as a child swallows a fig with physic in it. The effect was magical; in ten

minutes he seemed another animal. All the weariness—even the stumbling—vanished, and with erect head and pointed ears he galloped along neck and neck with Brown's strong handsome bay.

And so we rode past the farmhouse, where the ever watchful dogs howled at us again, without stopping until we gained the entrance to the hard road. Soon afterwards we saw the large sun sink out of the golden cloudless sky into the sea; and then, hardly a moment of twilight intervening, night was upon us, and the stars shone out in their southern brilliancy from the blue vault in which, but a few minutes before, the sun seemed to reign supreme and alone. Instantly, too, a different set of creatures filled the air; beetles and mosquitos, the huge bats and brilliant fireflies; while nighthawks and owls left the shelter of the rocks to commence their nightly search for carrion, moles, and "such small deer." Lucky it was for us we had hit upon the beginning of the road before dark, for we never should have found those faint, nearly obliterated wheel marks after sunset. Although on the hard road, we had soon to confine ourselves to a walking pace again, for there were break-neck ups and downs, besides many loose fragments of rock here and there scattered over it.

At last we stood upon the summit of the mountain backing Simons Town, and the very steep way down was before us. It is a road so steep that the few ox waggons which have to go up have often thirty beasts in pairs attached, and even then the plunging, struggling animals slip at every step over the smooth granite rock. We dismounted, and led our horses by the length of the bridle, for they will not in such positions walk beside a man, but persist in following at his heels like a dog. The lights of the town were soon seen, and we reached home as the clock of the naval yard struck ten.

THE NEW SERIAL TALE, HESTER'S HISTORY, commenced in the last number, will be continued from week to week until completed in the present volume.

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BY
MR. CHARLES DICKENS.

MESSRS. CHAPPELL AND Co. have the honour to announce that MR. DICKENS'S FINAL SERIES OF READINGS, comprehending some of the chief towns in England, Ireland, and Scotland, will commence at ST. JAMES'S HALL, LONDON, on Tuesday, October 6.

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